37

MODERN FIX

FREE

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Outsmarting Simon
Amanda Rogers
Pennywise
The Shins
HIM
Society 1
Stoic Frame
Slaves On Dope

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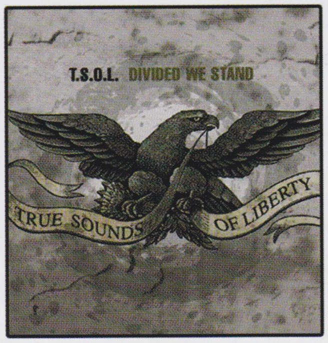
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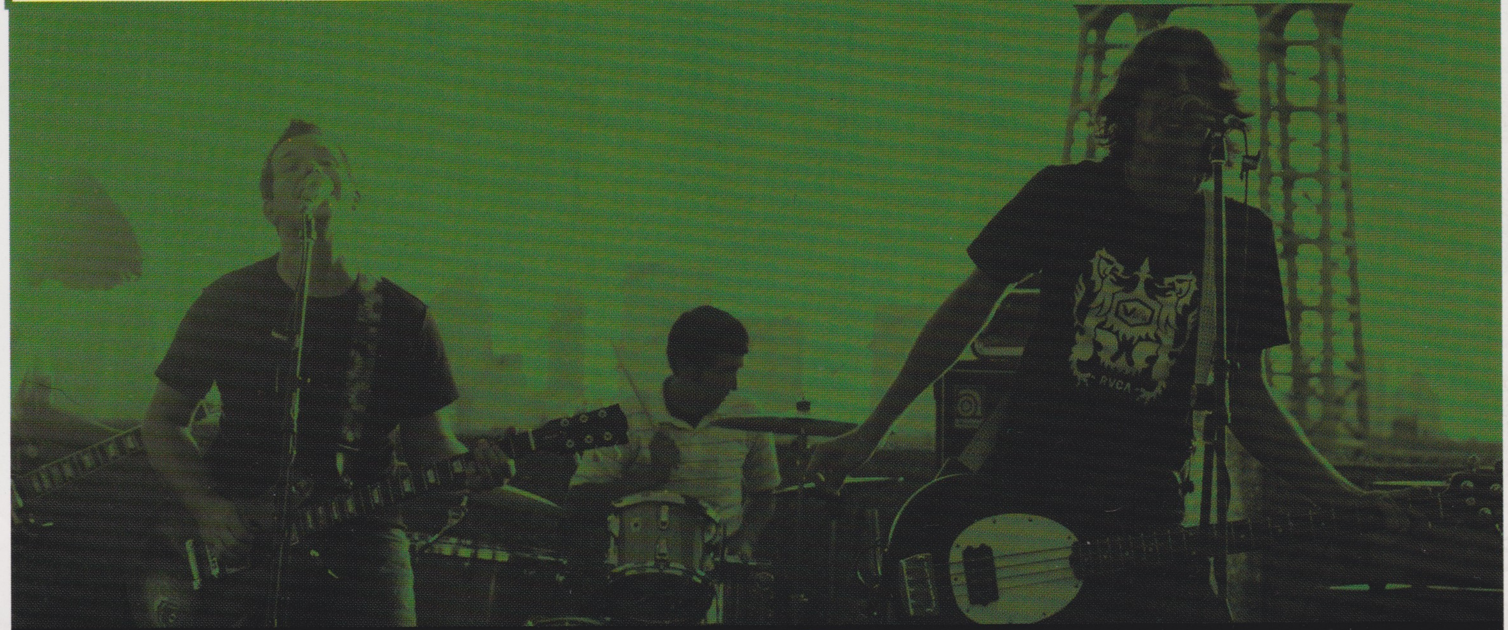

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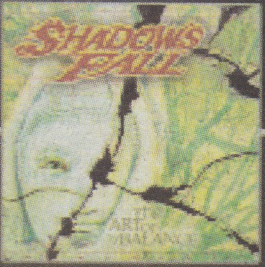
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THE ART OF BALANCE

**ARCH ENEMY**
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**STRAPPING YOUNG LAD**
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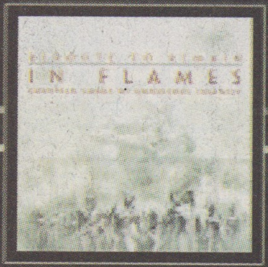
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**DIMMU BORGIR**
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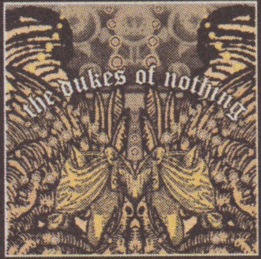

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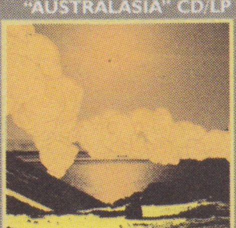

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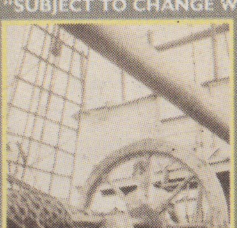

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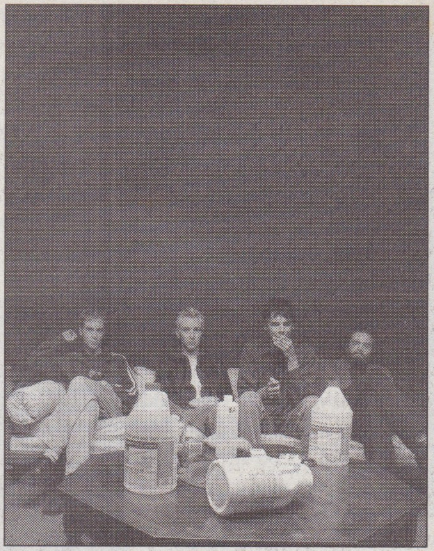
**Issue 37** **2003**



Cover Photo: Alison Weis

Did you ever do a drug then wish you didn't? That uneasy feeling of your first acid trip... trying to make sense of a world that has suddenly and uneasily shifted and now everything is hard to process. It's with that aftertaste of askew directions that **The Paper Chase** dose you hard on. **Disjointed**. Maybe it's the intentionally off-key, off kilter and constantly struggling for breath vocal pleadings of John Congleton. Perhaps it's the ugly bass stomps and creepy insecurity in the delivery of the music. **Disillusioned**. Those manic and repeating noisy elements of the rhythms constantly arguing with each other don't make things any more comfortable. **Distracted**. Pounding louder and louder just to be heard. Justifying their existence even though they suspect they shouldn't be there in the first place. Cello, Piano and some horns are welded into the mix. Tones are less constructed and emanate their feelings of dismay. **Diverted**. It's an exposing sense of not being afraid to sound beautifully repellent. **Deliver**.

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# And Now... The News...

by Kris Somera

The internet-bred rumor that the reformed **Pixies** are to open for the **Red Hot Chili Peppers** in Paris next June is false, according to a report from French-language music site MCM.net. The Red Hot Chili Peppers tip is just one of several unconfirmed Pixies booking rumors which would have the influential quartet playing, variously, the 2003 editions of the Eurockéennes Festival in France, the Witnness Festival in Ireland, and next May's Coachella festival in Indio, CA. The Coachella rumor is at least backed up by comments from **Radiohead**'s ***Thom Yorke*** in Urb that both Radiohead and the Pixies are being actively courted for next year's fest. An unidentified "spokesman" for the band told MTV the original lineup of the group would be reuniting for some tour dates in April 2004.

**Thom's thinking about stuff**

Having publicly announced his end as a rock musician (which was more of a personal, therapeutic announcement, it seems, than a public one) ***Krist Novoselic*** has now spoken out about potentially running for Lt. Governor in Washington State, 2004. With a foot in the Democratic Party door, Novoselic is well-known as a mouthpiece for liberal causes in the Seattle area. But his idea to run for office is somewhat squelched by the arduous task of challenging to two-term Lt. Governor Brad Owen (who is also known for his dabbling in rock 'n' roll, although it's safe to say that he never chucked his guitar into the air on national television and had it crash into his fat forehead and knock him senseless, which may cause him to reside in greater favor with the more politically moderate Washingtonians). Krist speaks on the upcoming political year: "I've been really contemplating how I want to get involved next year and make a contribution. It's going to be a big year and I'm trying to find a way to fit into it."

Geffen/Interscope will be releasing a Dolby 5.1 surround-sound mix of **Beck**'s "Sea Change" on December 16th, complete with six videos (five of which are previously unreleased) and an "art gallery" that displays while you're crying your little eyes out to "Guess I'm Doing Fine." The videos include new clips by ***Spike Jonze***, longtime Beck collaborator ***Steven Hanft***, and ***Jeremy Blake*** (the video artist who created the blurry washes of color that accompanied the Sea Change material on tour). We've also been instructed to inform you that the "Lost Cause" clip is the "falling Beck" version of the video, not to be confused with the "pirate Beck," "'70s porn star Beck," or "comically obese Beck" versions of the clip.

Rocket Fuel Films will be releasing a documentary of **The Minutemen**'s prolific, prodigious exploits, entitled "We Jam Econo -- The Story of the Minutemen". "We Jam Econo" incidentally, was a Minutemen lyric that became their de facto creed, referring literally to their Econoline touring van and figuratively to their self-sufficiency and independent spirit. The film is being cut by Tim Irwin and Keith Schieron, and will feature over eighty interviews, never-before-seen live performances, video outtakes (Mike Watt rips a fart, disrupting an otherwise seamless eight-note run: hilarity ensues) and hundreds of still photos. Because, everyone loves to sit around and look at still photos on TV, right?

The winds howl and darkness enshrouds North America as Britain's premiere shock-rock innovators **Cradle of Filth** descend upon our shores to dispense a month-long outbreak of mirth & mayhem with co-headliner **Type O Negative** and special guest **Moonspell**. Dubbed the "Blood for the Blood Gods" tour, COF is anticipated to expand upon their awe-inspiring stage performance that indelibly scarred the minds of Ozzfest concertgoers this summer, as the band headlined the second stage of the renowned traveling festival.

**Cradle of Filth**

The first edition of **Hilary Duff**'s signature line of Visa Gift Cards is already a smash with fans and shoppers alike. Requests for new card designs from collectors and Hilary's fanbase are through the roof. Now, to celebrate the success of the card, her platinum selling debut album, Metamorphosis, and her upcoming US tour, a limited edition Metamorphosis Hilary Duff Visa Gift Card is now on sale! Finally!

**Feed me!**

Veteran band **Warrant** will be spreading holiday cheer as they perform their last shows for 2003. They'll be performing several shows before the holidays, including a show with **Great White** in Kenosha, Wisconsin on December 20th.

Insert joke here

**God Forbid** will release their new EP "Better Days" through Century Media on February 24th. In related news, the band expects to begin touring in support of the album in February, while the recently filmed video for their track "Better Days" is set to begin airing next month. God Forbid have now released their new EP "Better Days" through Century Media. The effort will be available for a low-price, but will only be released to select stores, aside from Century Media's own filmed video for their track "Better Days" is set to begin airing next month.

God Forbid

USA Today is reporting that all is not lost and due to exceptionally strong DVD sales, the **Family Guy** may return with as many as 35 new episodes. A DVD set of the show's first 28 episodes, released in April, has sold nearly 1 million copies, making it this year's top-selling TV show and the No. 4 television title ever, according to Video Store magazine.

Sweeeet

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# Rhythm and News

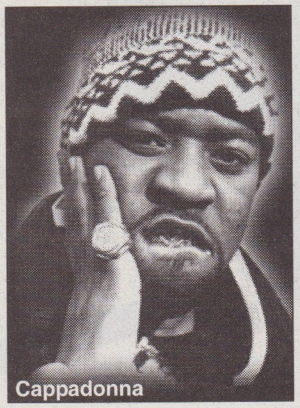
by Rondi Collins

If you haven't seen or heard **Tupac: Resurrection** (the film or the soundtrack), the time is now.

They're back, as a duo anyways. **Timbaland & Magoo** released 'Under Construction Part II' on Blackground.

**50-Cent** is bringing up his crew after he got himself off the ground. No shame here, its refreshing to see some unselfishness in this world. **G-Unit**'s 'Beg For Mercy' dropped last month on Shady/Aftermath.

**Raekwon the Chef** is releasing 'The Lex Diamonds Story' on his new label Ice water entertainment. **Fat Joe**, **Ghostface killa** and **Method Man**, **Cappadonna**, **Capone**, **Sheek Louch**, **Masta Killa**, and **Inspecta Deck** are featured as well as some up and comings.



Cappadonna

Dec. 23 will see **David Banner**'s 'MTA2: Baptized' in Dirty Water. On the same level as the tight rhymes and hard southern beats, is a whole new idea, Banner is going to give $50,000 in College scholarships to five winners. Five winning game tokens will be placed in the first 300,000 cds. The $10,000 can be used towards any higher education, but must be passed on to someone else, if the winner does not have such intent. Banner earned both his BA and MA, and attributes his success to those accomplishments.

Even though I now I already told ya, **West Side Connection** is dropping their new one 'Terrorist threats' on Dec. 23.

In the 'it's about time' department, **KMD** "The Best Of" will drop on Nature Sounds Records featuring cuts from debut album, 'Mr. Hood' and other classics.

Sock Bandit Productions, who brought us the hip-hop photography book Hip hop immortals, has taken it one step further with Hip-hop Immortals We Got Your Kids, an 80 minute film dedicated to the past, present and future of hip-hop. This film is not content with documentation, and strives to dig deep into the current state of the culture asking questions that will hopefully reveal some answers to questions about how hip-hop got where it is, and whether it should be a vessel of truth, or of money. Interviews include **Rakim**, **Marley Marl**, **Gang Starr**, the late **Jam Master Jay**, **Lil' Kim**, **Snoop Dogg**, **Busta Rhymes**, and **Fat Joe**. Clothing and industry representatives are also interviewed. "This film is not about the music; it's about the connections between Beats, Sneakers, Jewelry, Girls & Money," states Bonz Malone, author of Hip-hop Immortals. The film will be released Feb. 10.

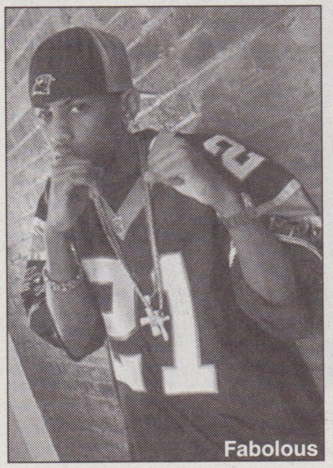
**La Symphony** dropped "The End is Now " on Dec 2. The first single "Gonna Be Alright" is getting airplay at massive radio stations around the states.

**Eryka Badu** will be on national tour after the release of 'Worldwide Underground' with an array of dates in February and March 2004.

On a different tone: Jan.16 brings us **James Brown** at the House of Blues on Sunset Strip in West Hollywood. Tics went on sale Dec 4. Jan. 22 you can catch **Bo Diddley** at the House of Blues on Sunset Strip in West Hollywood. Feb. 3 blues father **BB King** will bring it down at Fourth and B. Tix for this show went on sale Nov. 28 so don't sleep.

The *National Hip Hop Political Convention* is set for June 10-12 in Newark, NJ. Culminating from the diverse and progressive concepts held by the massive hip-hop community, Bakari Kitwana has organized activists, artists, educators, workers, and professionals from across the country to attend the convention. Kitwana is at the forefront of equality and race issues and wants to organize the hip-hop generation into a political body with a powerful voice that can have the ability to invoke change. A failing education system, mass imprisonment, political corruption, electoral fraud and many other issues will be at the forefront of the convention. It will be a time to put forth a political agenda for those already in the trenches of social uplift and for those wishing to gain information and get involved. This is your world!

Battles regarding the place of hip-hop in United States culture continue, but those who think hip-hop is another passing fad, now have something that even the most conservative anti-rap prone must take seriously: A Hip-hop ambassador sanctioned by the US State Department. Poet, musician, author, and teacher Toni Blackmon was appointed to this position in October. In her National Public Radio interview with Tavis Smiley in October, Blakmon said the focus of her attention will be on giving hip-hop a true, honest voice based in its origination not its commercialization as most currently see it. Backing up the duties with a background that stretches through the heart of hip-hop, she is concerned with many of the issues that critics of hip-hop are, its defamation through the use of pimps and hoes and the loss of its true character. What we need is "a bold voice to say that hip-hop is much more than what you hear on the radio and much more than what you see on TV" Blackmon said in her interview. Check out her recently published book is "Inner-Course: A Plea for Real Love."



Fabolous

*The Original Hip-Hop Cultural Sightseeing Tour* is more than a profit generating entity, it is a chance to see the places that spawned hip-hop from a hip-hop point of view. You may think that going on a tour isn't the proper way to experience these legendary spots, but add in a hip-hop legend for your tour guide, and another as a stop in guest along the way and all of a sudden the idea seems a little brighter. This tour through Manhattan was started three years ago by Debra Harris, but just a couple of months ago, it became a weekly affair, with tours every Saturday. Cost is a little high, $75 per person, but you get a real look at the locations where hip-hop was born, and most like Frank E. Campbell Funeral Home where service for Biggy was held, and non-descript corners where battles went down, have no marker other than the memory of those who were there to witness the event.

I'm really not the squeamish type but this one got my insides turning and my face a little bunched up. **Big Lurch** aka Antron Singleton has been handed a life sentence in the murder trial of Tynisha Ysais. In April 2002 Ysais was found in her apartment with her chest torn apart. Singleton was found wandering the street with blood all over his face under the influence of PCP. Later, portions of Ysais' lung were found inside of him. PCP, water, sherm, or whatever you wanna call it, the stuff is nasty!

One of the beautiful things about mixtapes is the chance to hear already successful artists breaking it down on the underground, accessing some of the verbal vernacular that's been kept on lockdown while roaming around in the land of the commercial. The mixtape circuit borders on the sacred, maintained by those who remain grounded in the culture. But on the adverse, we have the commercial mixtape, not as common and not as crackin', **Fabolous** has chosen this arena to release his upcoming project: 'More Street Dreams Vol 2 - The Mixtape'. In addition to being distributed commercially by Elektra, Fabolous has decided to add a little something extra that is sure to appeal to a variety of wannabes. Using an innovative approach to marketing, an interactive portion if his CD allows consumers the ability to mix the songs, create acapella and switch the beats around. The only sane thing I could pin down without actually putting an ear to it, is the exposure fresh artists **Mike Shorey**, **Farrah Franklin** and **Paul Cain** will acquire, which is a traditional and necessary function of what the mixtape is al bout. Beats will come from **Rockwilder**, **Swizz Beatz**, **Fingerz** among others, but Fabolous has said he's willing to give anything banging a try.

The U.S. government has once again surprised me by its high moral and ethical commitments to making this country one of tolerance and equality. I'm sure that's why the armed services is continuing to target people of color, specifically young African-Americans belonging to the hip-hop generation. The Army's marketing arm reaches far, and one campaign, "Taking It to the Streets" is aimed mainly at the recruitment of youth within the hip-hop community, which alao means, mainly African-Americans. A yellow, patriotically painted Hummer provides the first draw. Once within reach, possible recruits can enter contests to win army branded goods, are led inside to enjoy the multimedia sound system or use a flight simulator. To top it all off, the now thoroughly diluted and disgusting magazine known as ***The Source*** teamed up with the army to schedule a series of campus tour stops that featured interactive exhibits and physical challenges. The tours culminated in an MC battle judged by The Source Editors. Instead of conducting an ethical and straightforward recruiting campaign, the Army has chosen to use an extravagant car, free prizes, and hip-hop to get bodies into uniforms. **END**

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sketches of undying will
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AF0031

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AF0032

PIPEDOWN
MENTAL WEAPONRY
PIPEDOWN / MENTAL WEAPONRY
AF0030

WHATEVER IT TAKES
A FISTFUL OF REVOLUTION ★★★★ STARS & SKULLS EP
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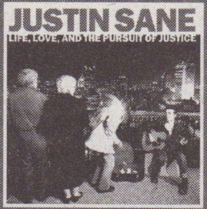
JUSTIN SANE
LIFE, LOVE, AND THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE
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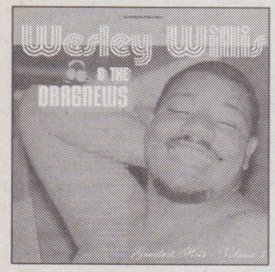
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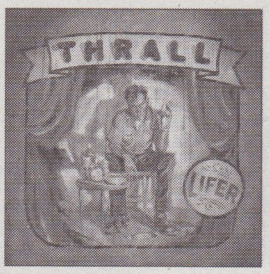
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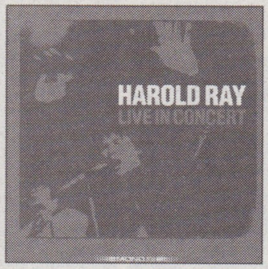
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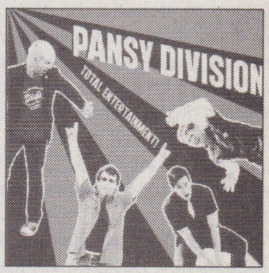
PHANTOM LIMBS
DISPLACEMENT
**THE PHANTOM LIMBS**
Displacement
LP: $9.00 | CD: $12.00 (Virus 305)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Re-cap of 2003's Rockin' Records:
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# SKATE NEWS

BY SIR HUNTER JOHNENA BLISS

**Mystery Skateboards** is a new company coming out of **ZERO**, with ***Adrian Lopez*** heading the direction of the company and stealing ***Ryan Smith***, ***Ryan Bobier*** and ***Lindsey Robertson*** for the team. Smith and Lopez are the two pros on the team as of now. ***Jon Allie*** is pro for ZERO as well.

Now that ***Chris Markovich*** left **Hollywood** for **Blind**, you must check out the Hollywood site; they are still 100% rock n' roll, with or without Mr. Markovich. www.hollywoodskateboards.com

How they skate in Alabama...

***Jamie Thomas*** is gonna have a wittle baby, aw, congratulations bro.

***Ben Gilley*** got the hell out of San Diego to head back to his hometown in Birmingham Alabama where he's probably hanging out at **Faith Skate Supply** with Peter filming and having a blast. Ben, why did you leave? I never got to tell you all the things I wanted to. I love you and want to have your child. Oh yeah, **Gareth Stehr** is riding for Faith now. Gareth also has a mustache, hot.

***Jake Brown*** is on **Reaper**.

***Corey Duffel*** will be having his own pro model pants from **Sessions**. I'm sure they will have mad steez, judging from Cory's personal flair.

**Toy Machine** will be coming out with a new video in the near future. It will be called "Good and Evil". Where has Ed been lately? I miss that guy.

Everything around me is filled with light. I love this world more than anything and am so stoked to be alive. I love sunsets as the sky fades to brilliant colors of the deepest emotions. Walking on the earth's soil is the most pleasant present given from the gods of our mother earth's soul. Trees and mountains sit ancient, as my respect for them grows with the bark of life. The ocean is truly impressive. A sea of life we live, finding happiness through nonfunctional life's of society pressure and a need to progress externally, avoiding inner growth.

Check out Leo Romero on the BB site

***Chris Lambert*** has quit the **Expedition** team, ***Greg Lutzka's*** now riding for **Almost Skateboards** and the **Brown Beanies** site is up and running and looking super hot, chizeck it izout, www.brownbeanies.com.

Mista Chris, where the fuck ya at? Can't scrap a lick so I know ya got your gat. Your dick all hard from fuckin your road dogs The hood you threw up with, homies you grew up with. Don't even respect your ass, that's why it's time for the Hunter to check your ass, nigga. Used to be my homey, used to be my ace, now I wanna slap the taste out yo mouth. Make you bow down to the Bliss, fuckin' me, now I'm fuckin you, little miss. Oh, don't think I forgot, let you slide, let me ride, just another homicide. Yeah it's me so I'ma talk on, stompin on the 'Keane'est streets that you can walk on. So strap on your LJ hat, your loc's, and watch your back 'cause you might get smoked, loc, Pass the bud, and stay low, 'cause you lost all your homey's love. Now call it what you want to... You fucked with me, now it's a must that I fuck with you.

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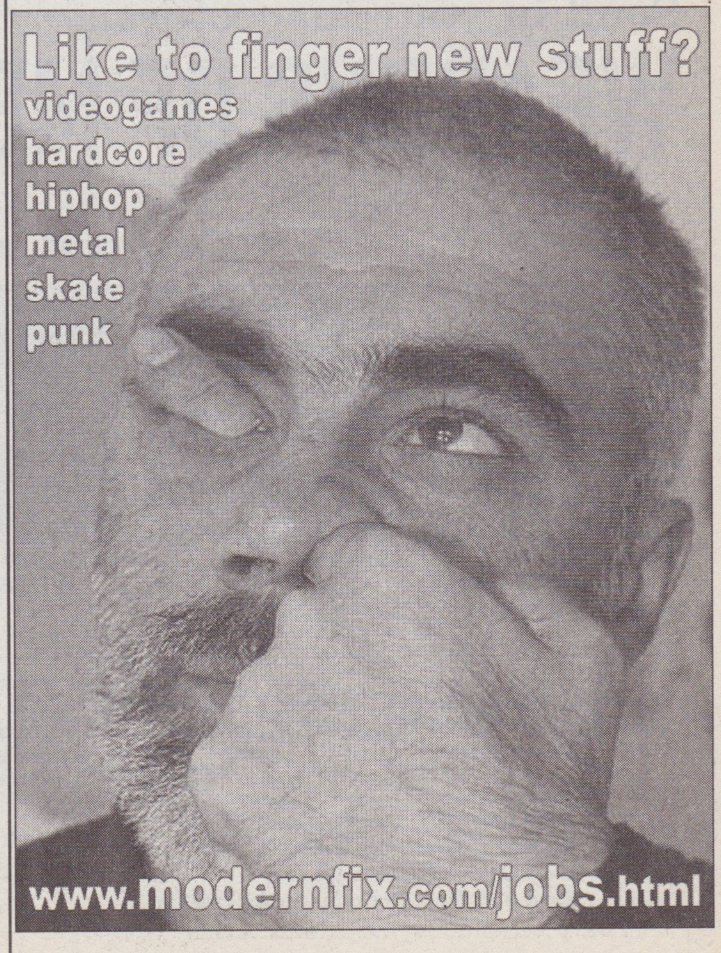

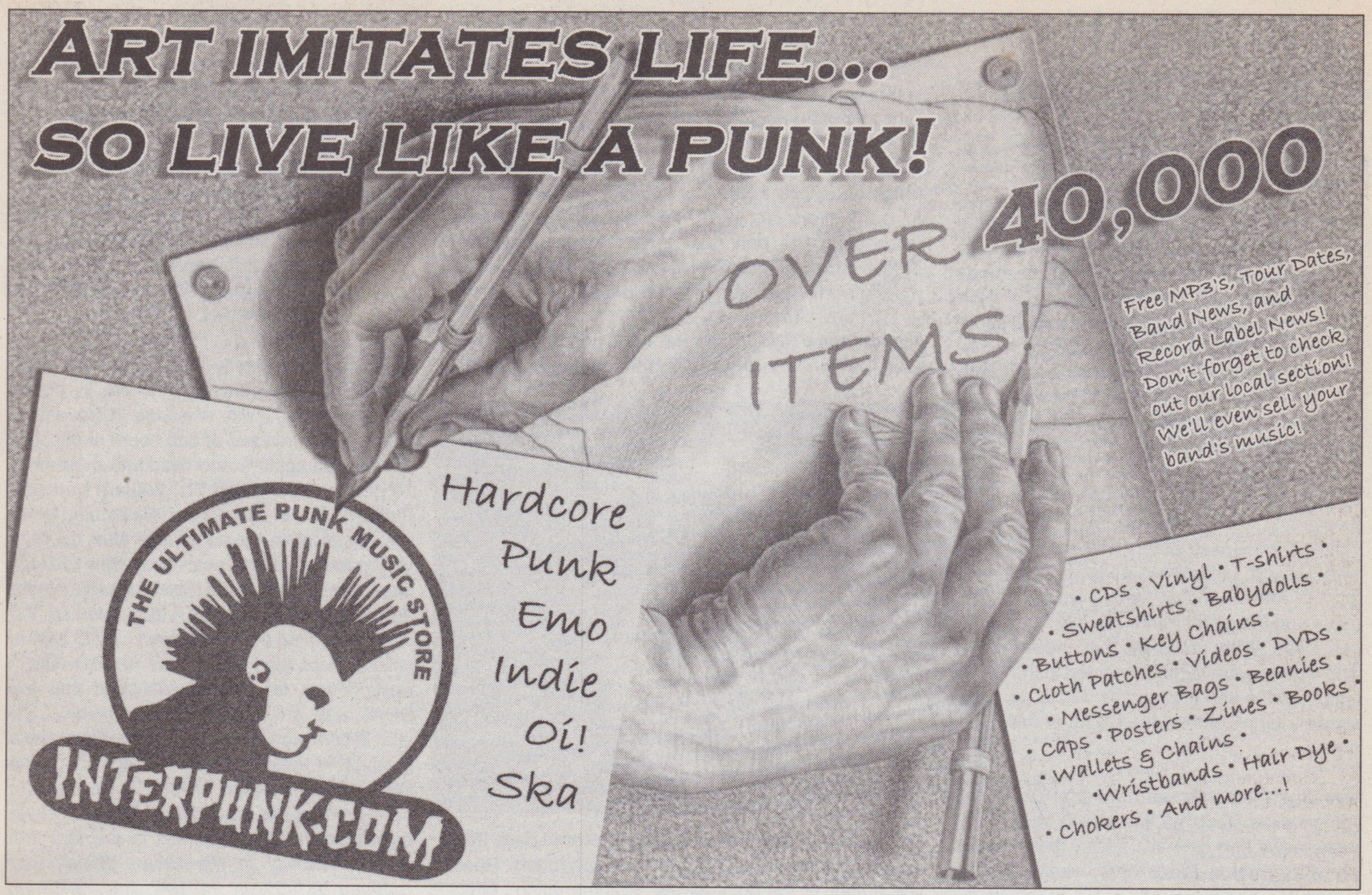

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# 011011100 111001001 100100!!!!!

by pr

The manufacturer Diebold, which creates many of the automatic teller machine's in our world, admitted that some of their machines were infected with the **Nachi worm**, a malicious computer program that exploits a security hole in Windows XP. The company wouldn't say how many of it's machines were affected. This isn't the first time an ATM was hit; in January, the Slammer worm shut down 13,000 Bank of America ATM's.

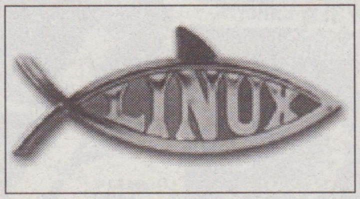
**Enjoy milk?** Well then you'll be pleased to know that over 50% of all cattle in the United States are effected with Bovine Leukemia, a exogenous type C retrovirus that infects lymphocytes and integrates randomly into host cell DNA. What does all that mean? The virus creates tumors, located in the lymph nodes and often times visible, in swollen lumps around the necks of the cow.

**Neil Bush**, the younger brother of current president **George W. Bush** is back in the news, this time in a messy divorce from his wife, Sharon Bush, of 23 years. What's interesting about this are some of the lucrative business revelations brought up. For example, when discussing his title at Grace Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp., owned by the son of the former president of China, he was asked about his payment, a tidy sum of $2 million dollars over five years. *"You have absolutely no educational background in semiconductors do you?"* asked Sharon's lawyer. "*That's correct.*" He was also asked about other business involvements, like when he was co-chairman of Crest Investment Corporation. He worked an average of three to four hours a week and received $15,000 every three months, stating that he provided Crest "*miscellaneous consulting services.*" When asked to elaborate, his reply was that he answered "*phone calls when Jamail Daniel, the other co-chairman, called and asked for advice*" Neil made the news in the 1980's when he was the director of Silverado Savings & Loan, which collapsed **at a cost of $1 billion to taxpayers** . He later denied any wrongdoing, but was sanctioned by the federal government for his part in the failure. And for the curious, Neil's current marriage ended in part due to his infidelity, when he admitted in the deposition that he previously had sex with several other women while on trips to Thailand and Hong Kong. According to Neil, the women knocked on the door of his hotel room, entered and had sex with him. He said he didot know if they were prostitutes because they never asked for money and he did not pay. "It was very unusual."

Remember those **anti-drug commercials** on vision a few months ago, which came dripping with fun statements like "*Where do terrorists get their money? If you buy drugs, some of it might come from you.*" Yeah, those. Well, it seems those tv spots were just a little too controversial, and the White House has pulled the plug on the series. This is a step backwards in **drug czar John Walters** world, as this was a five year, $195 million-per-year program, initially funded by congress in 1998. Sucks to be Walters, as polls with the target audience (teenagers) not only had zero statistical improvements towards marijuana use, but moved more markedly in a 'pro drug' direction. Oops.

Author **Russ Kick** made the front page of the New York Times recently with his "information archaeologist" efforts, mainly, removing the censored parts from a recent Justice Department Diversity report. Russ, the author of the book series 'Disinformation', effectively un-censoring text that the government didn't want us reading. What was so important in the document, a report on the employee's of the Justice department (responsible for enforcing United States civil rights laws)? Statements like that minority employees believe that the workplace is "*biased and unfair*", that they "*are significantly more likely than whites to cite stereotyping, harassment, and racial tension as characteristic of the work climate*" and that they "*are significantly under-represented in management ranks – comprising only 7% of career attorneys and 11% of supervising Assistant US Attorneys.*"

The British House of Commons Wednesday approved a government-sponsored bill that will reschedule cannabis from a Class B to a Class C drug, putting marijuana in the category of least serious drugs, along with steroids and some anti-depressants. With an overwhelming vote of 316-160, British parliamentarians approved the measure that will **effectively decriminalize marijuana use and possession** on January 29, 2004. Oddly enough, the bill will also double the penalties for cannabis sales from seven years to 14 years.



The government of Los Angeles County has put a ban on the computer term '**master**' and '**slave**', commonly used in hard drive's to identify the hardware in the IDE chain.

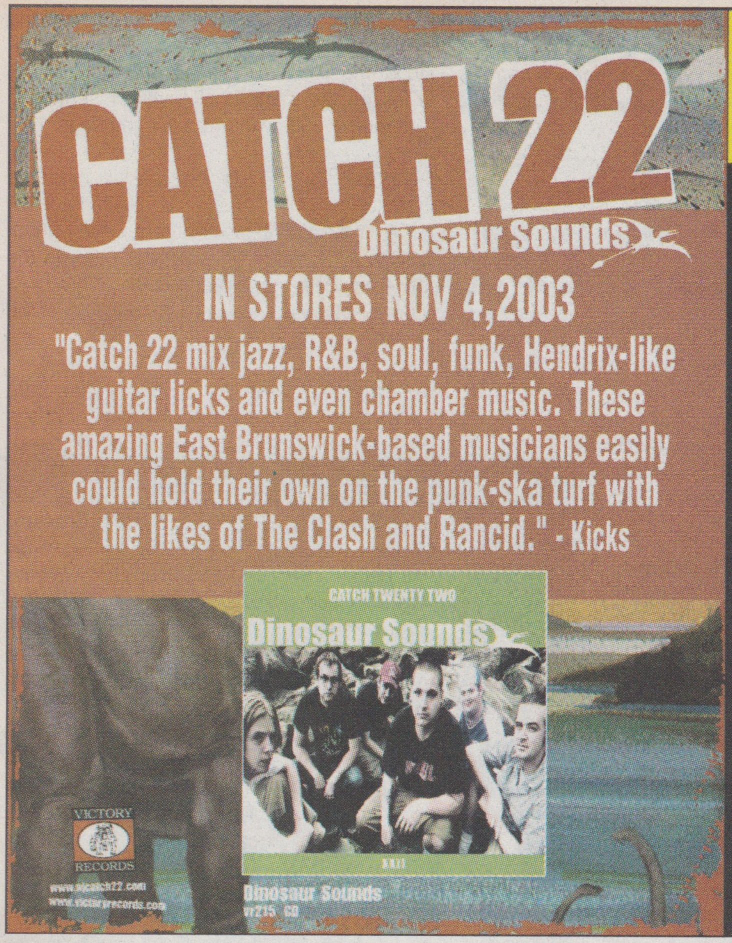
The **Stratford High School drug raid** is still in the news, mainly due to the video footage taken from the school's hallway camera and released to the media. The police raid, which occurred at 6:40am and involved an aggressive team of cops rushing thru the halls with weapons drawn, handcuffing startled students, turned up zero (uh oh!) drugs on the campus, even after searching with the grounds with drug-sniffing dogs.

Congress has quietly approved a measure that allows the **FBI** to subpoena your information from any business or organization without any permission and puts a gag order on the targeted business/organization. This was done quietly and without all the publicity of the controversial Patriot Act.

A former University of California drug researcher was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole in November after being convicted of one count of conspiracy to manufacture and distribute more then 10 grams of the drug LSD. **William Leonard Pickard**, 58, of Mill Valley, California, faces two consecutive life sentences after his conviction in a case that originated with a LSD lab discovered in a Kansas missile silo two years ago. In a case that the DEA trumpeted as "the largest LSD lab bust in history," DEAD agents seized more than 90 pounds of LSD. Other testimony in the case established that the DEAD had only seized four complete LSD labs in its history. Pickard and Apperson were involved in three of those seizures. St. Louis DEAD Special Agent William J. Renton, Jr.: "*The proof of the significance of these prosecutions and convictions lies in the fact that LSD availability in the United States was reduced by 95% in the two years following their arrest.*" An appeal is underway.

It was **Mickey Mouse**'s 75th birthday last month, and although we may never know how Walt Disney felt about black people, there was certainly mixed viewpoints in Mickey's earlier work. For example, the 1932 Mickey Mouse Annual opened with a poem entitled 'A Black Outlook', which featured Mickey and Minnie battling "fierce niggers." Earlier Mickey Mouse cartoons were actually reminiscent of typical cartoonish stereotypes of African Americans, with his black body, oversized features and (at least in the 1928 animated cartoon 'Steamboat Willie') his pleasure for singing the minstrel song 'Turkey in the Straw', originally known as 'Zip Coon'. Although this isn't the only famous cartoon character to show a darker side (the Popeye cartoon "You're a Sap, Mr. Jap" comes to mind) but something to think about the next time you visit Disneyland park.

Finally, China announced that it will use the free, open source computer operating system **Linux** for installation on one million computers in 2004, ultimately installing similar systems to over 100 million machines. Linux, created in 1991 in part by Helsinki University student Linus Torvalds and later built freely with the help of over 10,000 coders, has began spreading it's popularity in other countries where money is tighter and not as readily available to spend for costly systems like Microsoft's Windows. **END**



CATCH 22

Dinosaur Sounds

IN STORES NOV 4,2003

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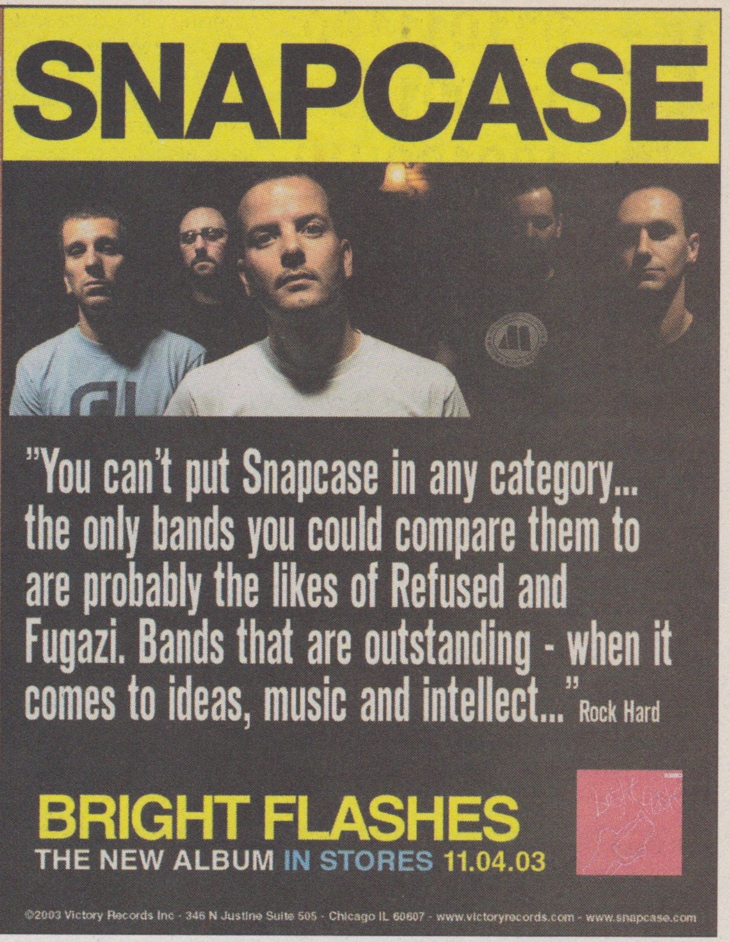

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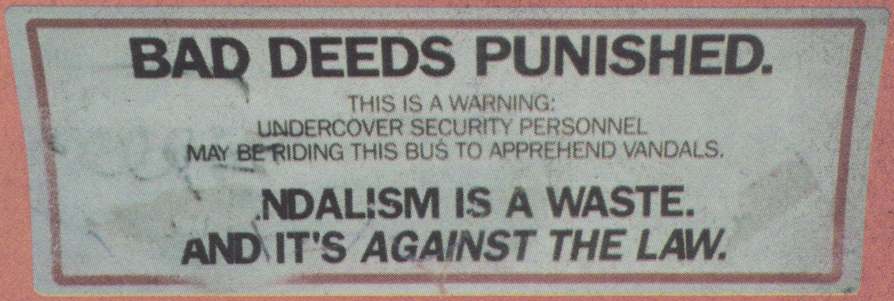
# THE GRAFF PAGE

words/photos: m. young

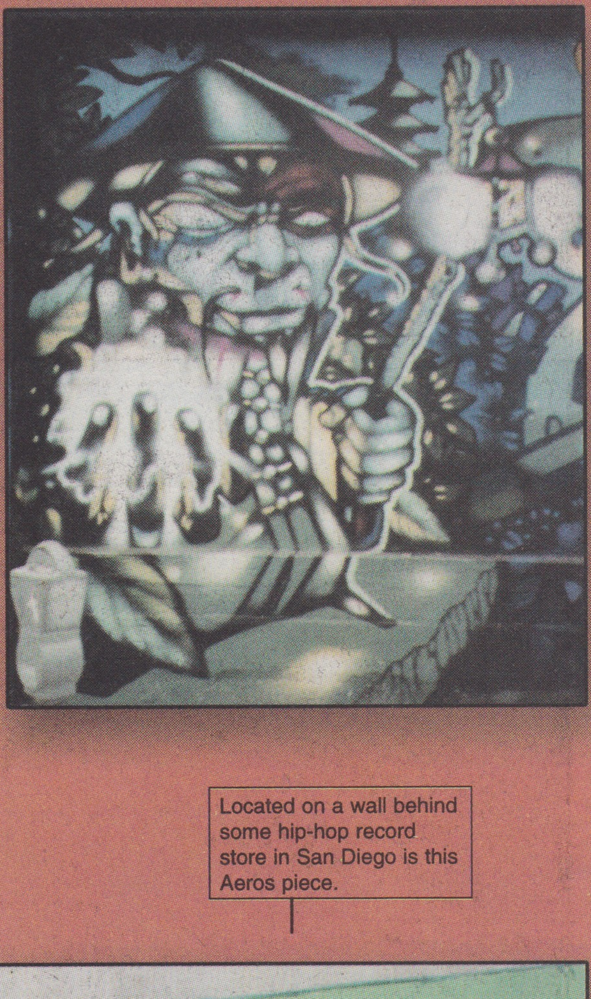


**BAD DEEDS PUNISHED.**

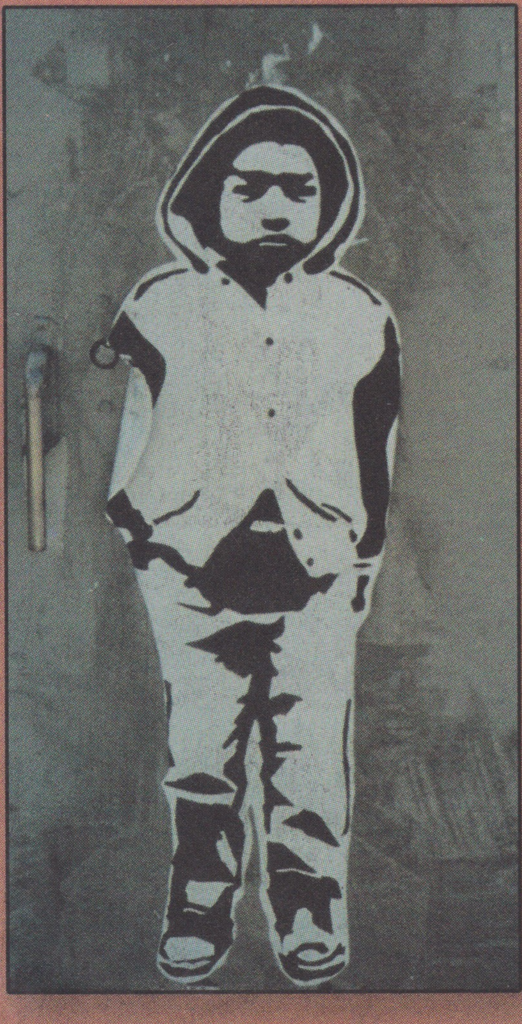
THIS IS A WARNING:
UNDERCOVER SECURITY PERSONNEL
MAY BE RIDING THIS BUS TO APPREHEND VANDALS.

**NDALISM IS A WASTE.**
**AND IT'S *AGAINST THE LAW.***

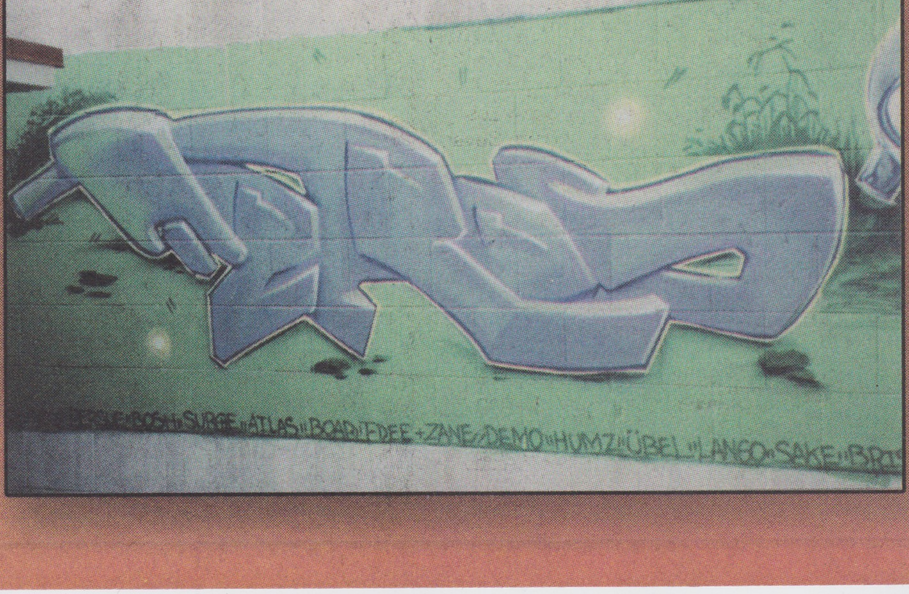
While riding the bus you can see signs like these warning potential vandals of possible undercover security personnel.
Watch out!
That smelly-ass drunken bum next to you might be more than he appears to be.

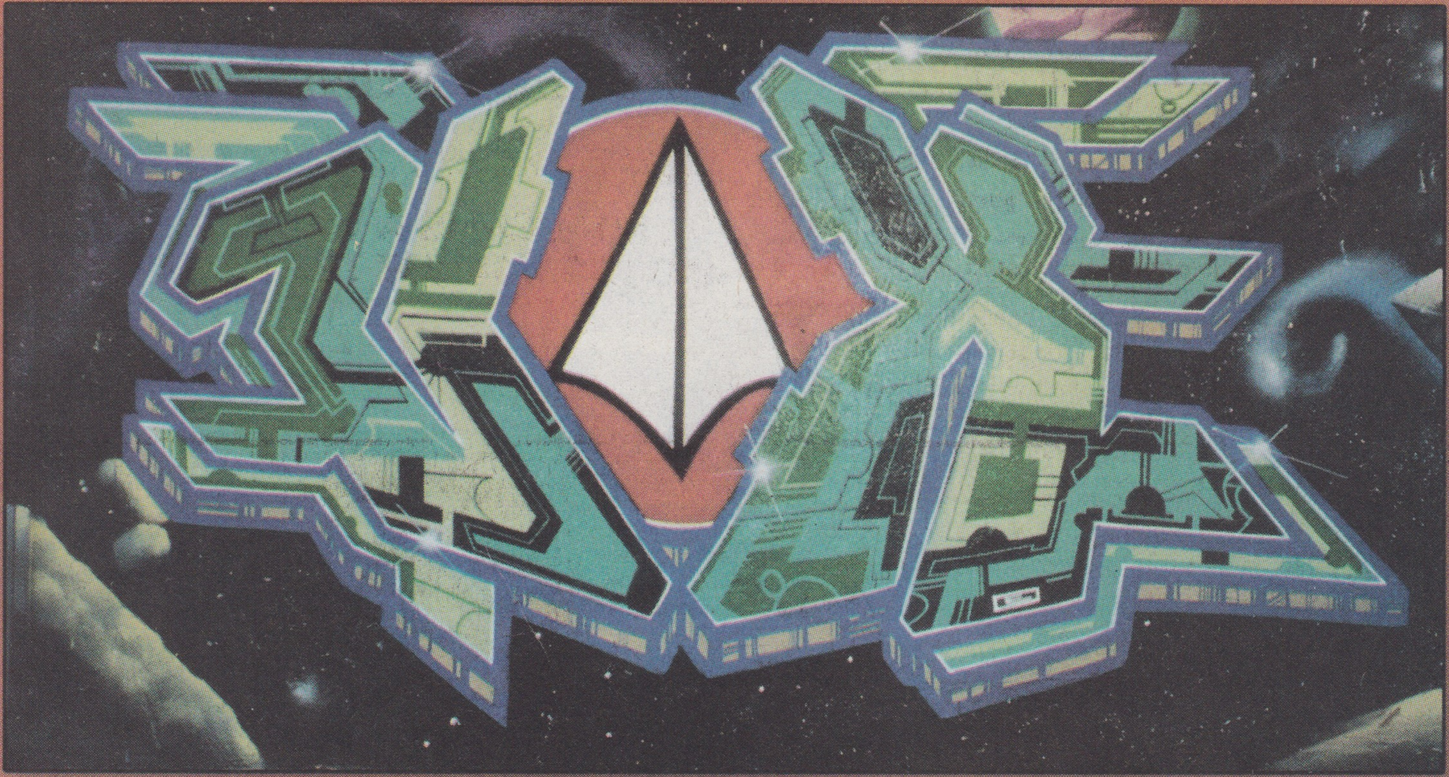


Ser Humano (to be human) pastes up these images of a border child for all to see.

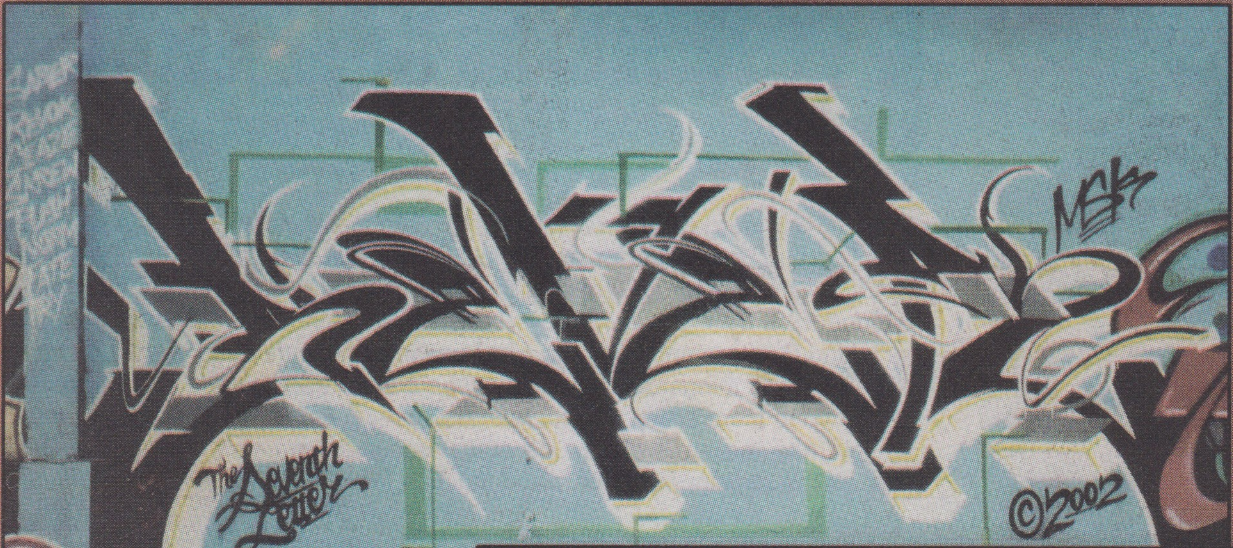


Located on a wall behind some hip-hop record store in San Diego is this Aeros piece.

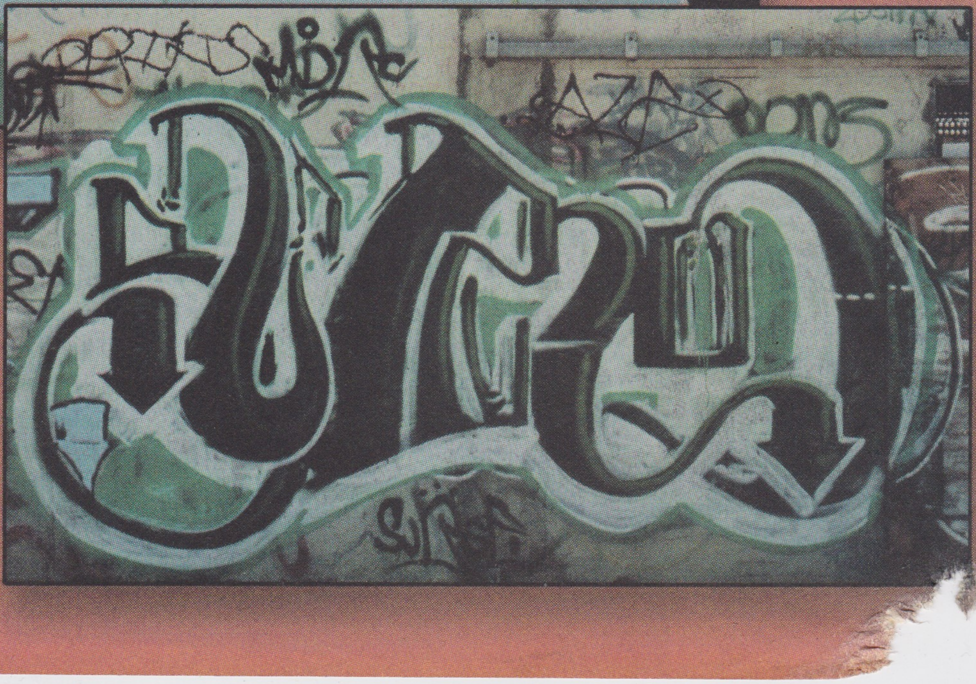

BOS SURGE ATLAS BOAR EDEE + ZANE DEMO HUMZ ÜBEL LANGO SAKE



This photo taken in Venice Beach was found on the side of a mini-market or video rental store. The whole wall depicted a Star Trek-like space scene with sci-fi graff pieces orbiting around in it.



Caught somewhere near downtown Los Angeles was this clean and precise Sever piece from The Seventh Letter crew.



Here is a Surge One piece that was painted on some old, condemned building in South San Diego off the I-5. Surge is currently facing graffiti related charges.

© Erin Broadley 2003
© Erin Broadley 2003

yourself
© Erin Broadley 2003
© Erin Broadley 2003

# CKY invades the sunset strip

## Key Club - Nov. 18 2003

CKY's Jess Margera, Deron Miller and Vern Zaborowski joined fans at the Key Club in Hollywood for an exclusive release party for the band's latest DVD "Infiltrate.Destroy.Rebuild - The Video Album" the latest collaborative offering from CKY and the it-boy of mayhem, director Bam Margera. Hosted by Island Records and Vice, the night began with a screening of the DVD and ended with all things rock and roll - beer, boobs, and a trip to the tattoo parlor. Beyond mere drunkenness, Margera, Miller, Zaborowski and fans partied straight into the arms of attitude and mischief, paramours that CKY knows best as the reigning kings of misconduct.

-Erin Broadley
(photos and text)

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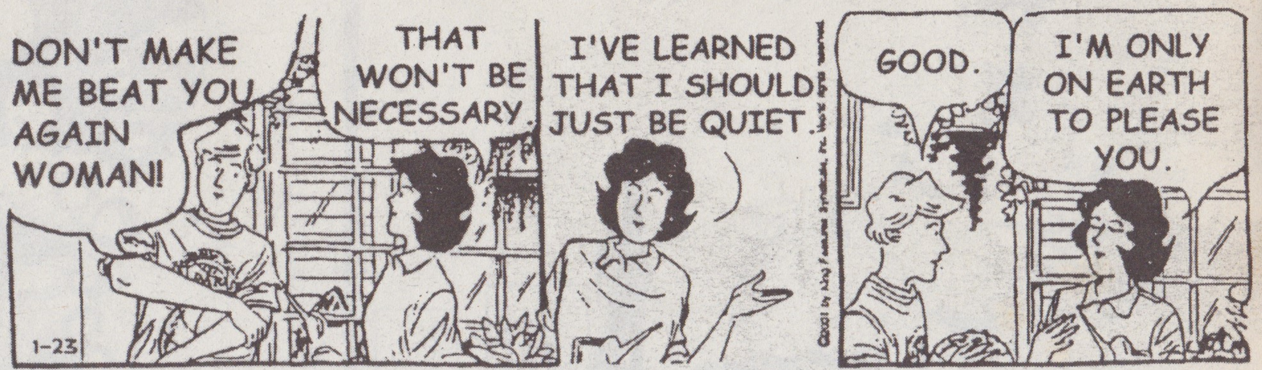
© Erin Broa

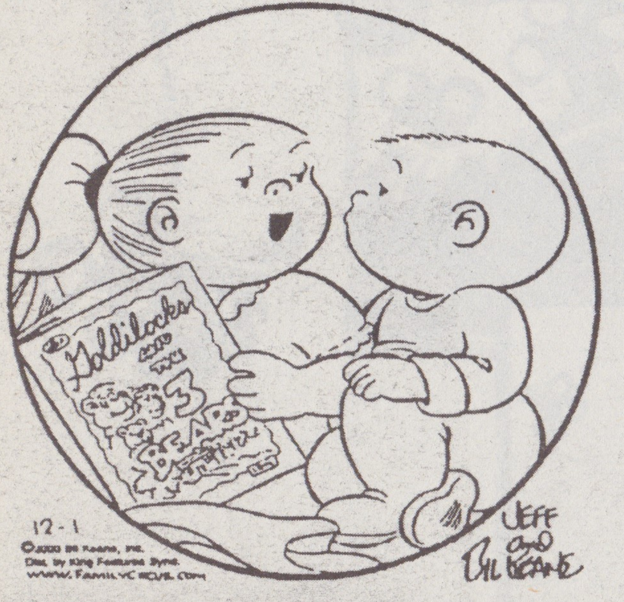
# fake funnies

by mike hollingsworth
& matt "full charge" fulchiron

**SALLY FORTH** By Steve Alaniz and Francesco Marciuliano


DON'T MAKE ME BEAT YOU AGAIN WOMAN!
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY.
I'VE LEARNED THAT I SHOULD JUST BE QUIET.
GOOD.
I'M ONLY ON EARTH TO PLEASE YOU.
1-23

**THE FAMILY CIRCUS** By Bil Keane


Goldilocks and the 3 Bears
12-1
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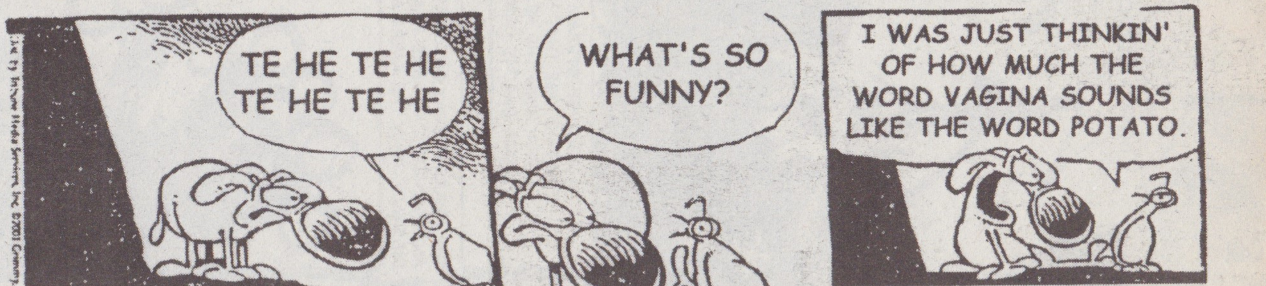
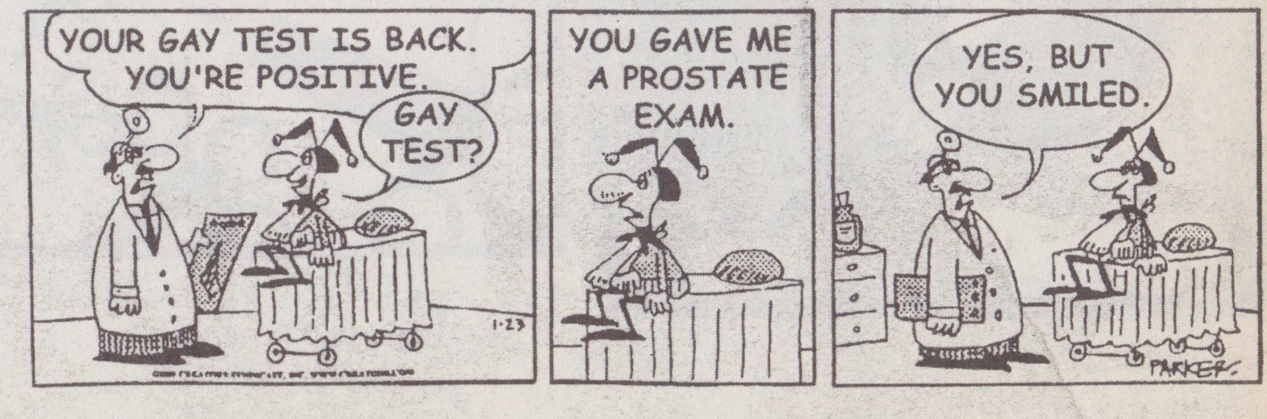
www.familycircus.com
JEFF and BIL KEANE

INTERESTING, INTERESTING. SCIENTISTS HAVE FOUND A CURE FOR BALDING, AND THEY'RE CALLING IT SUICIDE.

**MOTHER GOOSE AND GRIMM** By Mike Peters

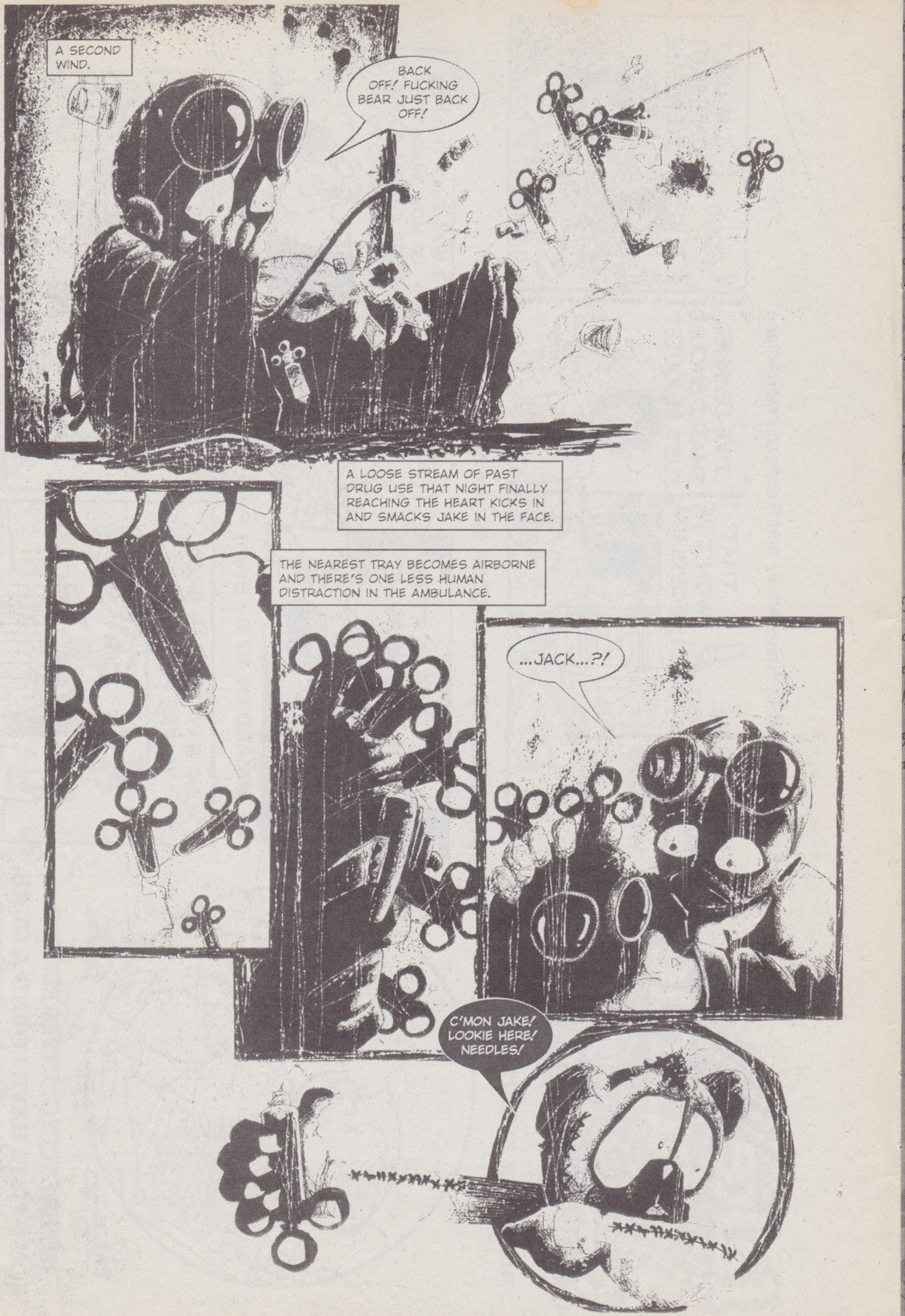

TE HE TE HE TE HE TE HE
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
I WAS JUST THINKIN' OF HOW MUCH THE WORD VAGINA SOUNDS LIKE THE WORD POTATO.

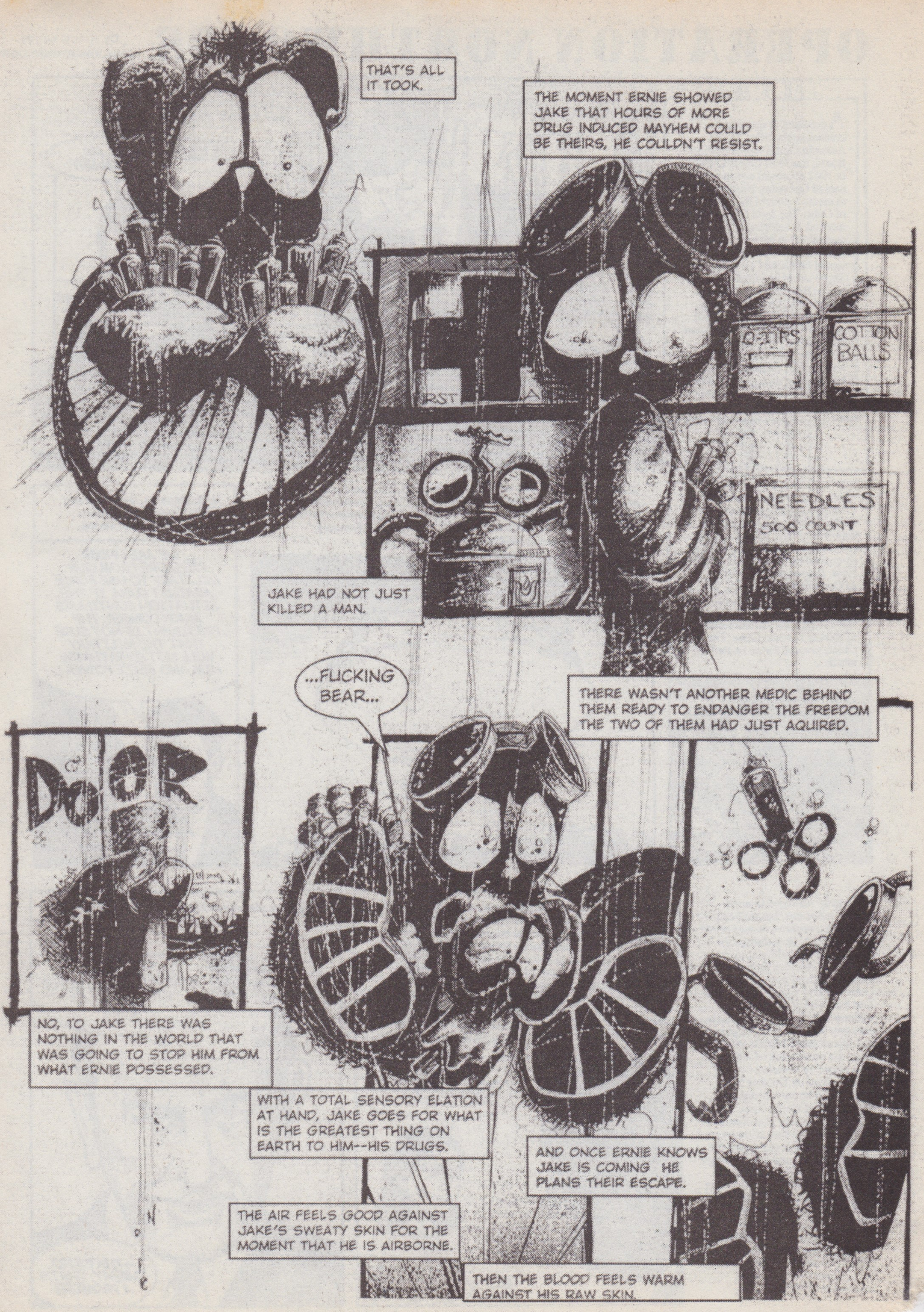
**THE WIZARD OF ID** By Brant Parker and Johnny Hart


YOUR GAY TEST IS BACK. YOU'RE POSITIVE.
GAY TEST?
YOU GAVE ME A PROSTATE EXAM.
YES, BUT YOU SMILED.
1-23
PARKER

# industriacide

created, written, penciled & inked by Sean Dietrich
lettered by: Jay La Valley

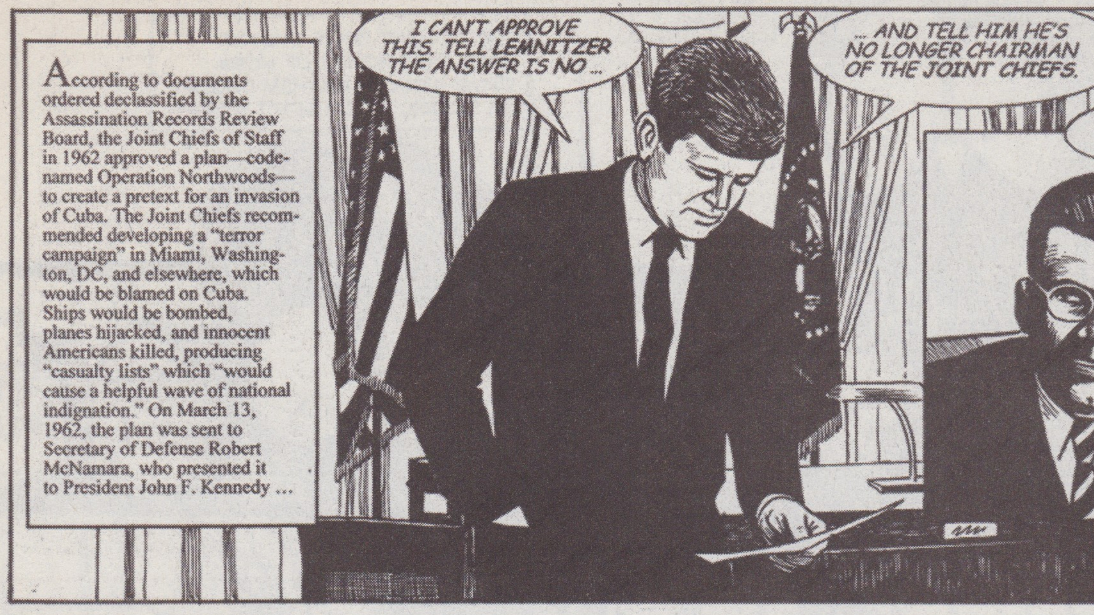

A SECOND WIND.
BACK OFF! FUCKING BEAR JUST BACK OFF!
A LOOSE STREAM OF PAST DRUG USE THAT NIGHT FINALLY REACHING THE HEART KICKS IN AND SMACKS JAKE IN THE FACE.
THE NEAREST TRAY BECOMES AIRBORNE AND THERE'S ONE LESS HUMAN DISTRACTION IN THE AMBULANCE.
...JACK...?!
C'MON JAKE! LOOKIE HERE! NEEDLES!


THAT'S ALL IT TOOK.
THE MOMENT ERNIE SHOWED JAKE THAT HOURS OF MORE DRUG INDUCED MAYHEM COULD BE THEIRS, HE COULDN'T RESIST.
Q-TIPS
COTTON BALLS
NEEDLES 500 COUNT
JAKE HAD NOT JUST KILLED A MAN.
...FUCKING BEAR...
THERE WASN'T ANOTHER MEDIC BEHIND THEM READY TO ENDANGER THE FREEDOM THE TWO OF THEM HAD JUST AQUIRED.
DOOR
NO, TO JAKE THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE WORLD THAT WAS GOING TO STOP HIM FROM WHAT ERNIE POSSESSED.
WITH A TOTAL SENSORY ELATION AT HAND, JAKE GOES FOR WHAT IS THE GREATEST THING ON EARTH TO HIM--HIS DRUGS.
AND ONCE ERNIE KNOWS JAKE IS COMING HE PLANS THEIR ESCAPE.
THE AIR FEELS GOOD AGAINST JAKE'S SWEATY SKIN FOR THE MOMENT THAT HE IS AIRBORNE.
THEN THE BLOOD FEELS WARM AGAINST HIS RAW SKIN.

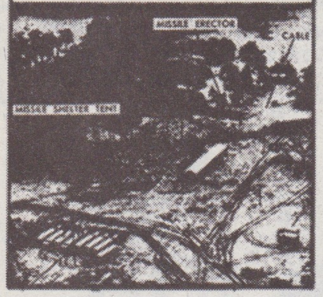
# OPERATION NORTHWOODS

by mack white
www.mackwhite.com

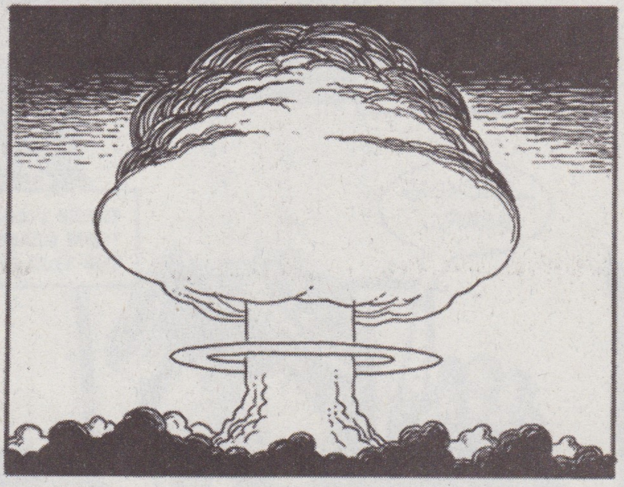
According to documents ordered declassified by the Assassination Records Review Board, the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1962 approved a plan—code-named Operation Northwoods—to create a pretext for an invasion of Cuba. The Joint Chiefs recommended developing a "terror campaign" in Miami, Washington, DC, and elsewhere, which would be blamed on Cuba. Ships would be bombed, planes hijacked, and innocent Americans killed, producing "casualty lists" which "would cause a helpful wave of national indignation." On March 13, 1962, the plan was sent to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who presented it to President John F. Kennedy …


I CAN'T APPROVE THIS. TELL LEMNITZER THE ANSWER IS NO …
… AND TELL HIM HE'S NO LONGER CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS.
YES, MR. PRESIDENT.

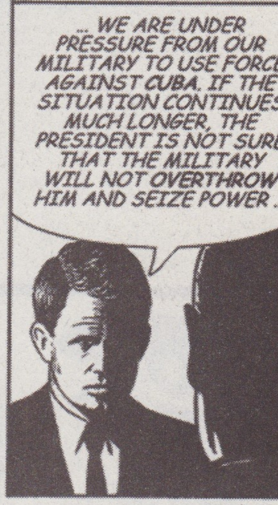
There already existed great distrust towards Kennedy among those in the military and intelligence community who perceived him as having mishandled the CIA's ill-conceived Bay of Pigs invasion. Now, following his rejection of Operation Northwoods, this distrust deepened. Then, on October 16, 1962, Kennedy was shown aerial surveillance photos of missile bases in Cuba. The Joint Chiefs pressed for an immediate attack …


MISSILE ERECTOR
CABLE
MISSILE SHELTER TENT

In the nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union that would have followed such an attack, more than 300 million human beings worldwide would have been killed. Fortunately, Kennedy resisted the pressure to attack and instead sent his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, to meet with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin …

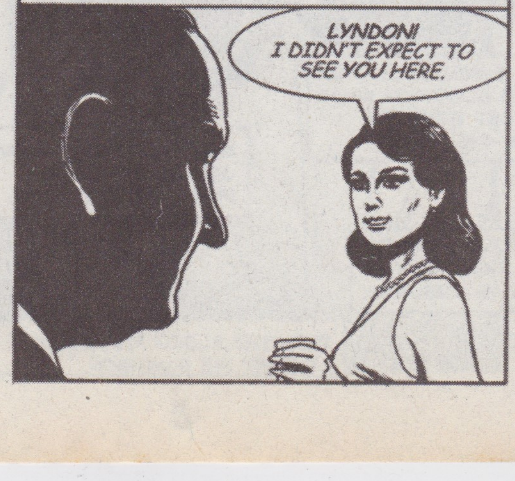


In his memoirs, Soviet Premier Nikita Kruschev quoted the Attorney General as saying …

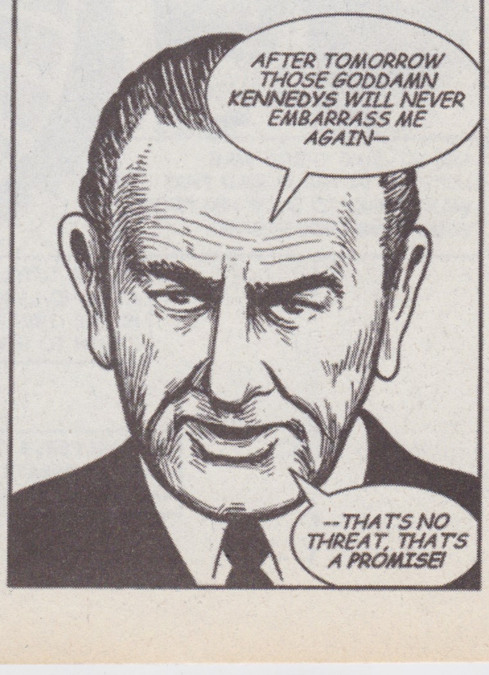

… WE ARE UNDER PRESSURE FROM OUR MILITARY TO USE FORCE AGAINST CUBA. IF THE SITUATION CONTINUES MUCH LONGER, THE PRESIDENT IS NOT SURE THAT THE MILITARY WILL NOT OVERTHROW HIM AND SEIZE POWER …

Kennedy managed to avoid nuclear holocaust, but avoiding a military overthrow would prove more difficult. In exchange for Kruschev's commitment to remove the missiles from Cuba, Kennedy agreed not to invade Cuba. He also signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Many in the military-industrial complex were unhappy with these developments and feared that Kennedy would show the same "lack of resolve" with regard to Vietnam—a fear soon realized on October 2, 1963, when he announced the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam. Kennedy also eliminated the oil depletion allowance—a highly profitable tax dodge for oil companies—and in other ways was actively working to end the Cold War and the growing power of the military-industrial complex. At the same time, his brother was prosecuting organized crime figures such as Carlos Marcello, a business associate of Texas oil men. The Kennedys were making big changes—and powerful enemies in the process …

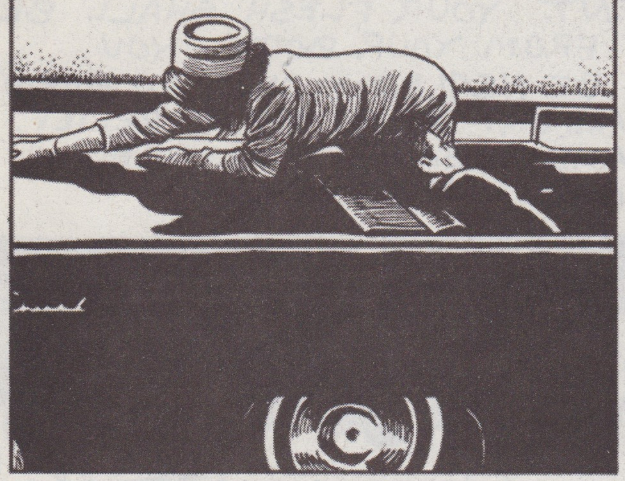
Vice President Lyndon Johnson was supported both by Texas oil interests and Carlos Marcello. In addition, he had been involved in criminal enterprises with the likes of Billie Sol Estes and Bobby Baker—scandals which the Kennedys were using to force him off the 1964 presidential ticket. On November 21, 1963, he attended a party at the Dallas home of oil baron Clint Murchison. Also in attendance were J. Edgar Hoover and Richard Nixon. Johnson's mistress Madeleine Brown was there as well. Years later, she told how all the men went into a conference room to talk privately. Then, when they came out …


LYNDON! I DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE YOU HERE.

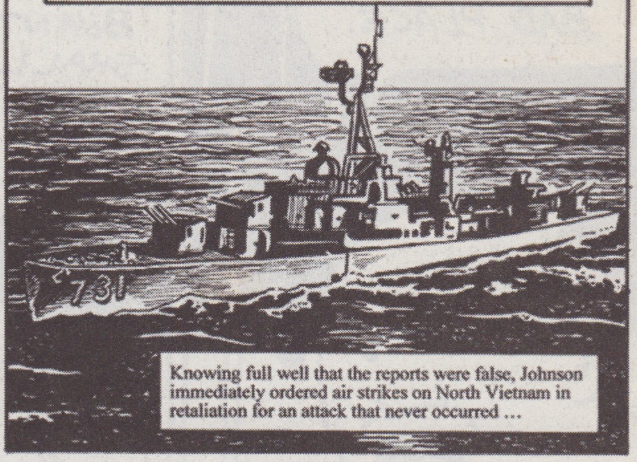
Johnson strode over to her and said fiercely …


AFTER TOMORROW THOSE GODDAMN KENNEDYS WILL NEVER EMBARRASS ME AGAIN—
—THAT'S NO THREAT, THAT'S A PROMISE!

The execution of John Kennedy took place the next day in Dallas, a city in the territory of mobster Carlos Marcello, as well as under the control of oil barons Clint Murchison and H. L. Hunt. Senator Ralph Yarbrough, riding with Lyndon Johnson in the car behind Kennedy, stated that Johnson ducked before the first shot was fired. It is likely that nine shots were fired in all. The final shot came from the front …

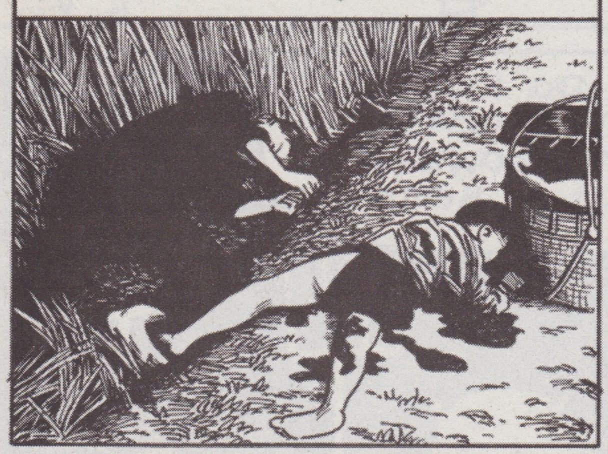


Shortly after taking over the presidency, Lyndon Johnson began escalating the war in Vietnam. On August 5, 1964, American newspapers reported that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had fired on the *USS Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin. Captain John J. Herrick, the task force commander in the Gulf, cabled Washington, DC, to say that no such attack had occurred—but to no avail …



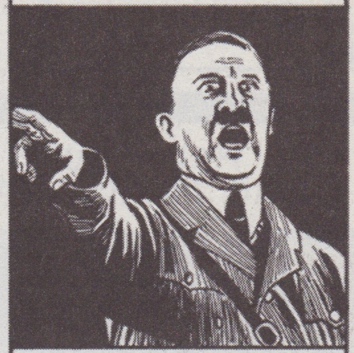
Knowing full well that the reports were false, Johnson immediately ordered air strikes on North Vietnam in retaliation for an attack that never occurred …

By the end of the war in Southeast Asia, 58,000 Americans and 2 million Asians had been killed—and many billions of dollars had been made by defense contractors such as Brown and Root—Lyndon Johnson's largest supporter. To the men who make such great profits, the human cost of war is nothing …



In addition to great profits, come the spoils of war—control of another nation's natural resources, mastery of its people. War also allows the government an excuse to exert more authority over its own people. Civil liberties are never more vulnerable than in wartime. The warmongers, then, have much to gain, and any means that advance their ends are considered justified. In the absence of a good reason to attack a nation, a reason can be invented—as shown by the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the Operation Northwoods documents. These are not isolated examples. The historical record shows, for instance, that the explosion of the *USS Maine* in 1898 was falsely blamed on the Spanish in order to ignite a patriotic outrage among the American people and herd them into the Spanish-American War—the motive being to seize Spain's territory in the Western Hemisphere …

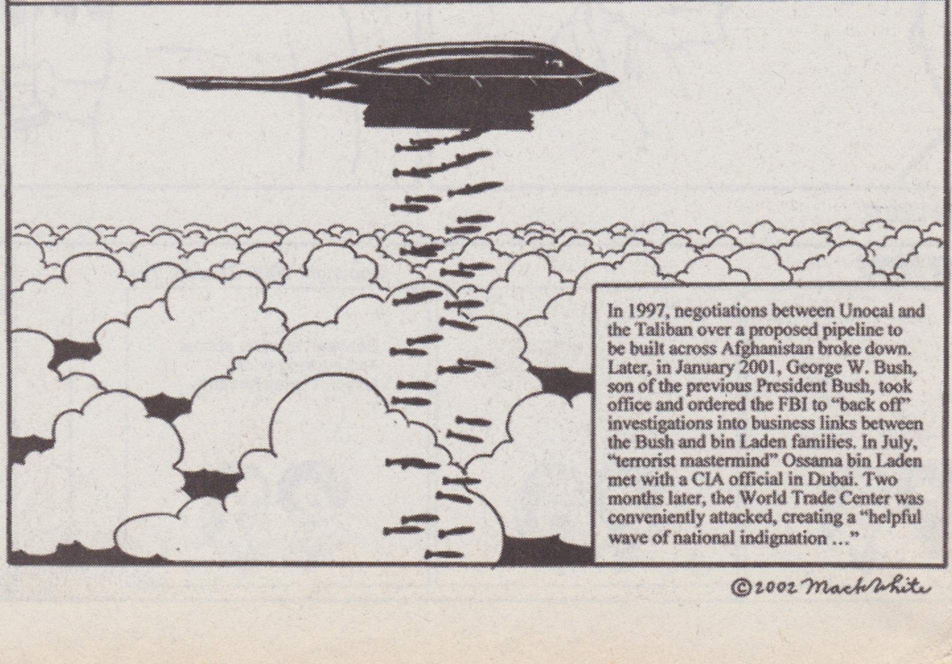
It is in fact a very old trick, practiced throughout history by the world's worst tyrants …



In 1933, the Nazis burned down the Reichstag and blamed their political enemies. The next day, Adolf Hitler was granted sweeping powers, thus setting the stage for the carnage of World War II …

The methods described in the Operation Northwoods documents, then, are not unique. What was unique was the president's refusal to carry out those plans. Since Kennedy's death, however, the military-industrial complex has encountered no more such obstacles. The Cold War has ended, but other excuses have been found to maintain a wartime economy—and always some hoax has been perpetrated to cause the American people to support wars which only serve corporate interests. One motivation for the Persian Gulf War, for instance, was to force Iraq to stop the "over-production" of oil which was driving down oil profits. In Senate testimony, April Glasspie, US Ambassador to Iraq, stated that, under orders from President George H. W. Bush, she informed Saddam Hussein that the U.S. would not intervene if Iraq invaded Kuwait. Saddam Hussein took the bait and invaded. Then, knowing that Americans would not support sending their sons and daughters to die for oil profits, the Bush administration hired public relations firm Hill & Knowlton to drum up war fever ...

In congressional testimony scripted by Hill & Knowlton, the Kuwaiti ambassador's daughter, pretending to be a nurse, described Iraqi soldiers looting incubators in a Kuwaiti hospital and throwing the babies on the floor to die—a completely false story. This resulted in a "helpful wave of national indignation," and so the war began …



In 1997, negotiations between Unocal and the Taliban over a proposed pipeline to be built across Afghanistan broke down. Later, in January 2001, George W. Bush, son of the previous President Bush, took office and ordered the FBI to "back off" investigations into business links between the Bush and bin Laden families. In July, "terrorist mastermind" Ossama bin Laden met with a CIA official in Dubai. Two months later, the World Trade Center was conveniently attacked, creating a "helpful wave of national indignation …"

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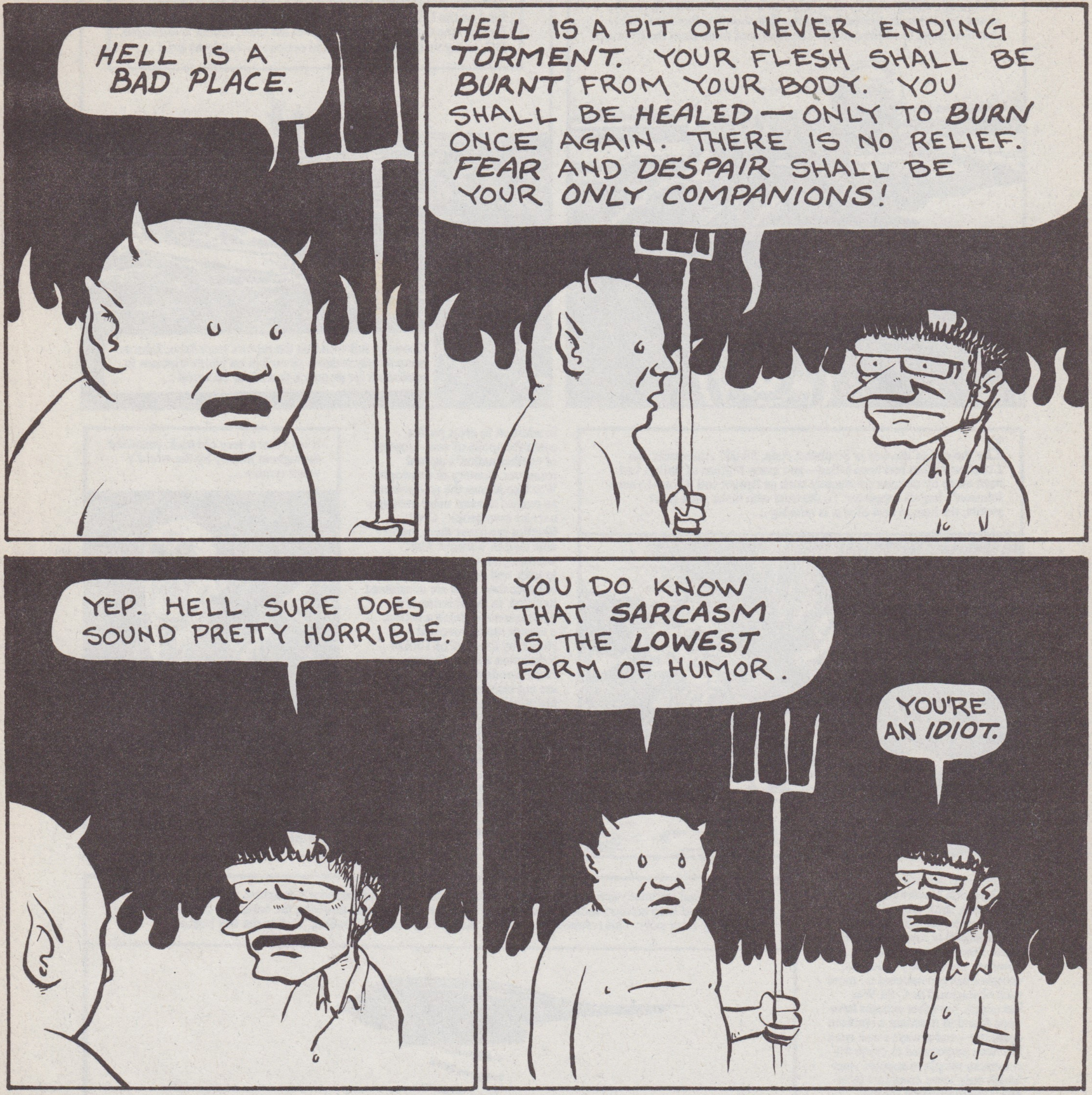
# TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN

BY SHANNON WHEELER


HELL IS A BAD PLACE.
HELL IS A PIT OF NEVER ENDING TORMENT. YOUR FLESH SHALL BE BURNT FROM YOUR BODY. YOU SHALL BE HEALED — ONLY TO BURN ONCE AGAIN. THERE IS NO RELIEF. FEAR AND DESPAIR SHALL BE YOUR ONLY COMPANIONS!
YEP. HELL SURE DOES SOUND PRETTY HORRIBLE.
YOU DO KNOW THAT SARCASM IS THE LOWEST FORM OF HUMOR.
YOU'RE AN IDIOT.

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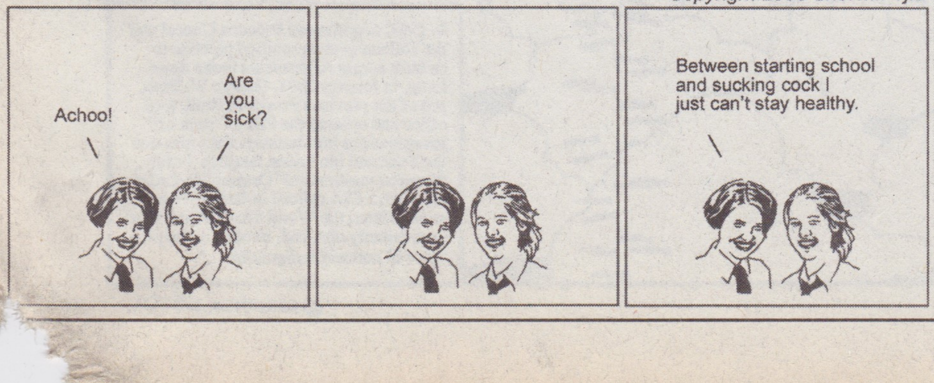
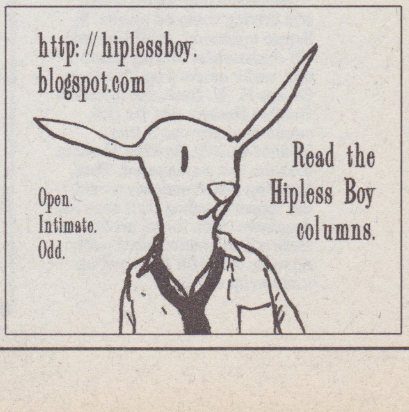

Achoo!
Are you sick?
Between starting school and sucking cock I just can't stay healthy.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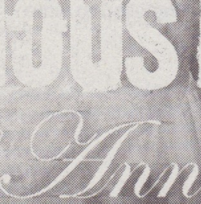
**NORA**
*"Dreamers & Deadmen"*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# “Stoic frame”

Viper Room

September 26, 2003

## Three years ago

I made the decision to go on hiatus from Modern Fix, opting for some corporate digs and a suit. Call me a sell out, but I'd had enough of the manufactured noise being cranked out by record labels and honestly looked forward to the constant hum of my hard drive. Now, with a bit of an attitude adjustment, I'm back and pleased to bring you the first band I've actually felt compelled to write about.

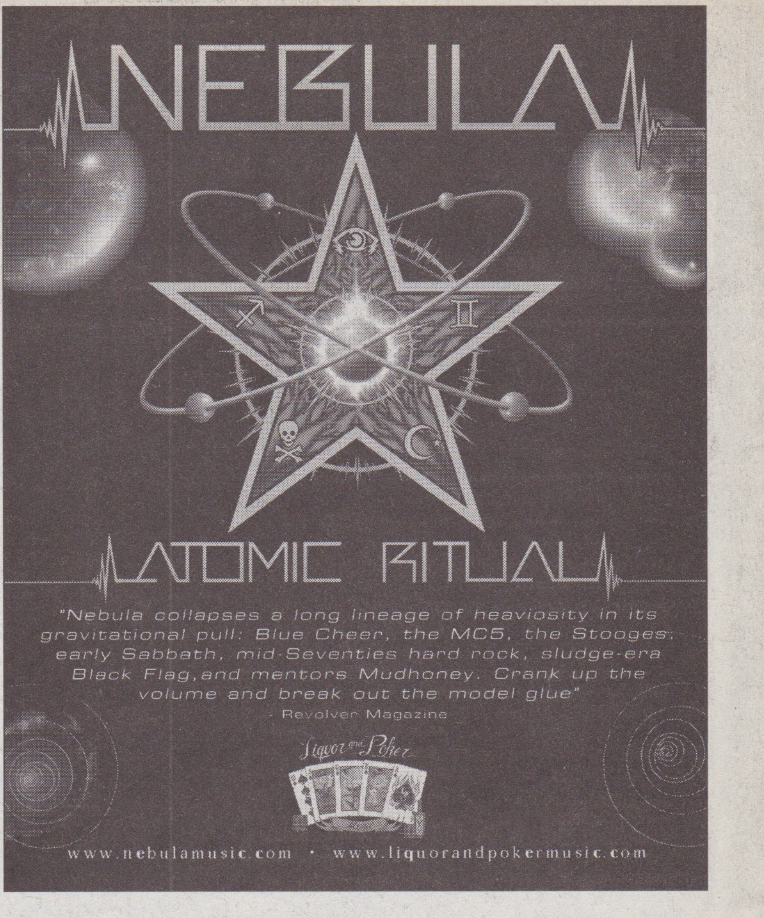
## Re:cently,

I had the misfortune of being dragged to the Viper Room by a friend who swore the band we were about to see would make the painful trip to Sunset Blvd. worthwhile. Thankfully she was right. LA newcomers, Stoic Frame **(www.stoicframe.com)**, offer the same creative and socially conscious ingénue that bands like Rage and System of a Down once took to a new a level. For those of you out there who still crave music with meaning, this fiercely polemical band offers lyrics that blend a call for political activism with their own cauterized version of rock and Latin beats. Drawn from their beginnings in El Salvador, a country savaged by warfare and natural disaster; Stoic rolls a politically charged message out on a carpet of brusque guitar licks and a variety of drum textiles. Like-minded bands such as Puya and Soulfly come to mind, however, Stoic's sound is a bit more wistful and still possesses the raw edge that comes with a garage band yet to be diecast and mass-produced by a label.

Theirs is a show that leaves one spiritually moved and I encourage you to seek them out should they land in your neighborhood. Not easily pigeon holed, Stoic has successfully developed a sundry of ethnically diverse and aggressive arrangements that has re-opened the door to an era of conscientious artists.

- M. West

“



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- Revolver Magazine

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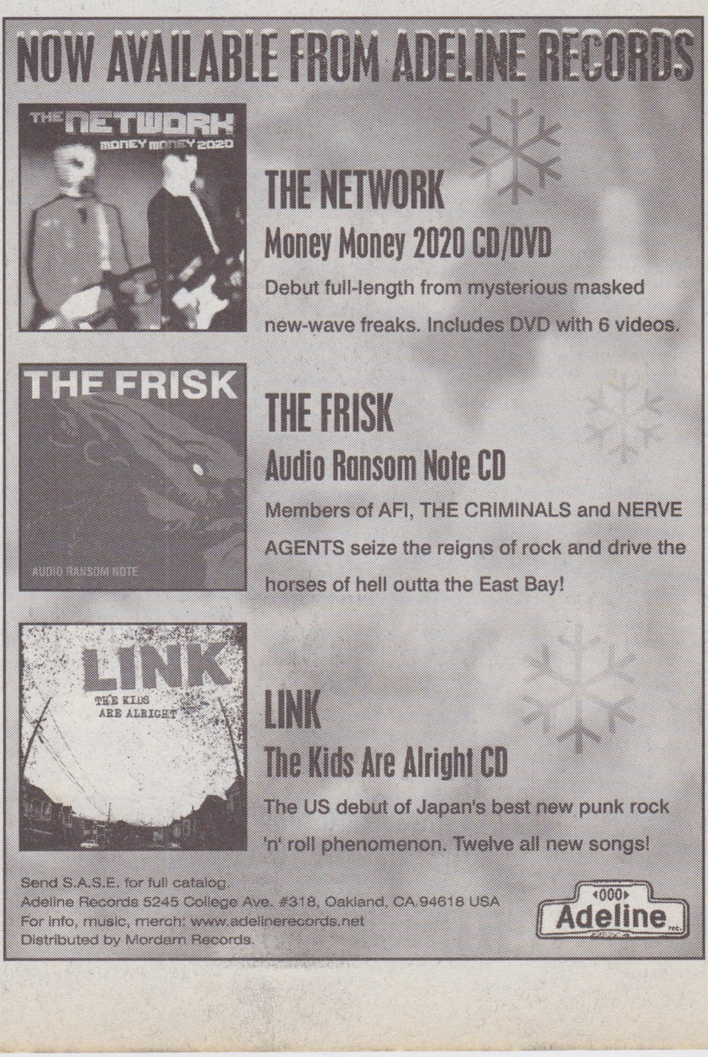

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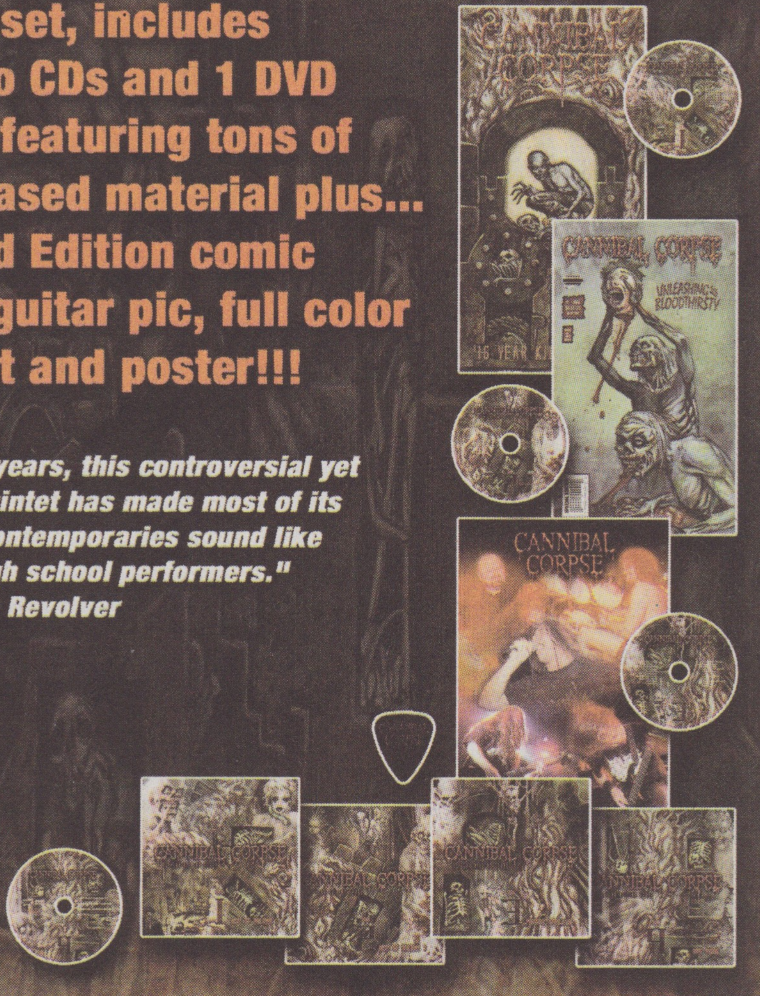

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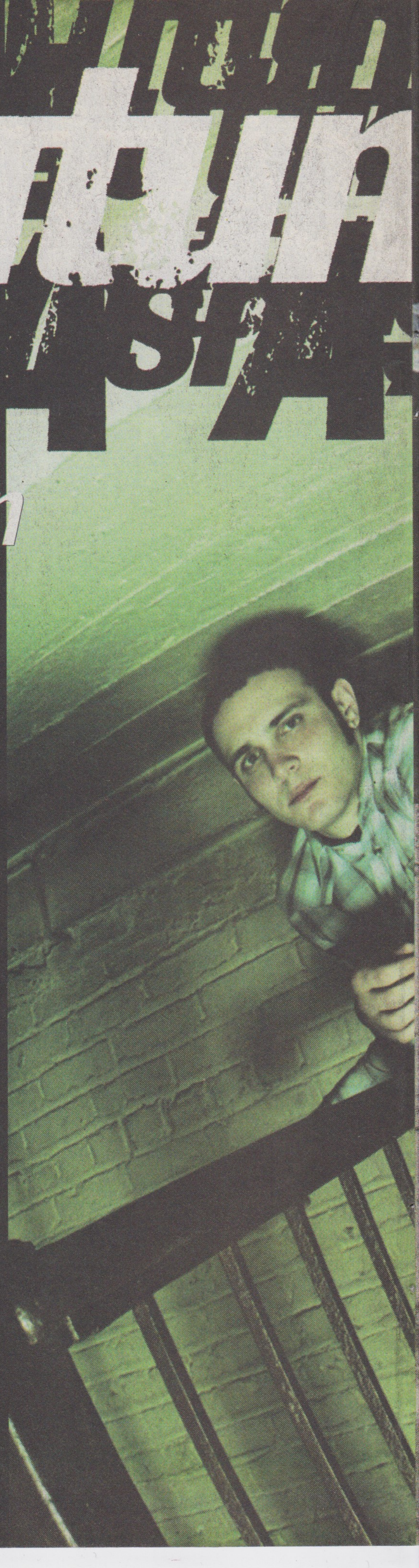
# from Autu

*interview by james wright*
*layout by matthew torres*

## Feeling The Fiction



"We got up at five in the morning and went straight to the studio. I screamed my head off when the morning was still in my throat," explains From Autumn to Ashes frontman Benjamin Perri.

The 5 A.M wake up calls were part of the grueling schedule From Autumn To Ashes endured to create their epic sophomore outing "The Fiction We Live" with producer Garth Richardson. The effort is the band's most musically diverse offering to date and one that is sure to turn many hardcore kids on their ear.

Modern Fix caught up with vocalist Benjamin Perri to talk about his band's beautiful sophomore effort, the hardcore scene and why meeting Bruce Dickinson of Iron Maiden left him in awe.

**When you released your debut, you became Ferret's best selling band. Did you ever think you'd get the reaction that you got?**
Ben: No, we never think that. We just thought that we were going to have fun. We're doing really well, it was a surprise and we're happy with it.

**You guys were on the road for months and months for your debut. What was the hardest part touring as an independent artist?**
The hardest part was actually going to these cities and not having our album available in stores. So the hardest part was the distribution being very limited. The only way for us to get people to come to our shows was by pummeling the city, tour after tour, after tour. Word of mouth eventually got around that people should come check our band out. That was probably the hardest part; everything else was easier. Being away from home, that was easy, playing the shows, touring around, that was the easy part. The hard part was actually getting people to listen.

**What were some of the high points for you over the last couple of years?**
Just being able to play in front of so many kids each night. Being able to let them see our work, that's the best feeling anyone can ever have. Having someone feel exactly what you're feeling and relate to it and sing it back to you, it's an amazing feeling.

**You recently did the Donnington Festival in England, what was that like?**
Pretty much like a dream world. You have festivals like Hell Fest, which is a hardcore/punk rock festival in Syracuse and Furnacefest, which is another hardcore festival down in Alabama. It's just a bunch of your peers, and then when you go to Donnington, it's like you walk into the true rock stars. You can walk backstage and run into Marilyn Manson, Chris Cornell of Soundgarden, you can run around a little more and run into Metallica. When you're a kid, you watch these people, and they're surreal. Then you're actually back there with them, talking to them, watching them. It's a strange, amazing feeling.

**Were you star struck at all?**
I wouldn't say star struck, but when I met Bruce Dickenson from Iron Maiden, one of my favorite bands ever, I wasn't star struck, but I was in awe. We had a good conversation and he actually looked through the program guide for the show and said that his kid liked our band a lot. I was amazed.

**Was that like the ultimate compliment? It came full circle because his kids enjoy your band, just like you enjoyed his?**
Yeah, exactly. It was awesome; I was definitely flattered by it.

**What prompted the decision to sign with Vagrant?**
Just that they were behind us 100%. Whatever we did, they said, "You write your record, give it to us, we'll put it out". There was no, "Change this, do this, sound like this, write a radio song". They let us write our songs, go in the studio, put them down in CD and put it out.

# nto Ashes

FROM AUTUMN TO ASHES
the fiction we live

# from Autumn to Ashes

**I heard a rumor that you guys were going to sign with Island Def Jam.**
Yeah, they weren't behind us 100%. They wanted us to change stuff, do this and that; we want to be our own band. We write our own music, it's from the heart, and it's not just music. We needed to have 100% control of what we did.

**Getting into the record, can you explain the concept behind The Fiction We Live?**
There's not really a concept. It's more like the study of human emotions and seeing how people deal with those emotions.

**Would you say it's a study of your own human emotions, or people in general?**
People in general. We've been on the road for the past two and a half years; we've got to witness a lot of reactions from people in different situations. I got that stuck in my head, and that's how I formulated my lyrics.

**Do you think that you've grown as a person in those two years?**
I definitely have, and I definitely reached the point where my maturity caught up to my age, finally. It took a long time for that to happen, but I think it finally happened.

**This record is a lot more melodic and dynamic than your debut. What do you attribute that growth and development to?**
Just being in the band three years with each other and growing as a group. You definitely have to grow, I wouldn't say necessarily change your sound, but play what you feel and don't compromise everything for everyone else. Do what you want to do, just write what you feel inside.

**If you could send one message out with that record, what would that message be?**
Never answer your own problem, there's always an answer, and I think our lyrics say that. Just know that there's never a dead end, there's always a way out of something.

**Can you give us an idea of who the character of "Autumn" is and what she represents?**
I'm not really the best one to explain who she is. In general, I think everyone in their life knows an Autumn, someone who has everything going for them. They're at the top of their class, they can do whatever they want to do and just reach unlimited levels, but then something in their life triggers a collapse and they fall down to the bottom of the barrel again. That's pretty much what it is.

**Are you hoping that your music can be there for them when they are at the bottom?**
Exactly.

**What's your take on the hardcore scene in general?**
There are a lot of good bands coming out. It's a healthy way for kids to come out and explore their insides. I think that the music industry was trying to make it the next trend, but since it didn't really catch on, they let it go, which is good.

**When you started the band, originally, did you have a clear vision as to what you wanted to accomplish?**
No, it was just to get out on the road, tour a little bit. Just have some fun, this is a dream come true.

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**Do you still set goals to keep yourself going?**
Definitely. We just want to keep doing this as long as we can, as long as we're still having fun. I'm going to do it for as long as I possibly can.

**What was it like working with Garth for this record?**
That was one of the best experiences ever. He was a hockey nut. It was right during the playoffs, and Vancouver and Toronto were playing and Toronto's his team. We were in Vancouver recording and Vancouver lost the game. He decided to buy a Vancouver flag and go outside one of the studios where a bunch of Vancouver fans were, light it on fire and burn it in the middle of the street. He's out of his mind; I love him.

**So how did he help the band achieve the sound that you wanted to achieve with this record?**
I think he realized that we were more than we were when we first walked into the studio. He pushed us further; he pushed us right to our limits. We got up at five in the morning and went straight to the studio. I screamed my head off when the morning was still in my throat. He thought that it was the best time for me to get the deepest, roughest sound. I had no idea I could sound the way I did; he pushed me that far.

**I guess that working with him helped you develop the band a little bit?**
Definitely. I think that we're where we are today partially because of him.

**Do you think that you'll work with Garth in the future?**
I would love to. We had a good studio relationship; we had a good outside the studio. We played in New York a little while ago and him and his assistant came out to see us. We're going to be in Vancouver in a couple of days, I'm sure he'll be there. It's not just a producer/ band relationship I think we became friends.

**How do you want people to remember you in ten to twenty years from now when they look back over your career?**
I hope they can separate us from the package a little. I hope we stand out in people's minds by helping people through tough situations and help them grow as people. I hope we get them through a tough time, or this or that; that will be important to me.

**Do you get that reception when you go on the road?**
Yeah, I get e-mails all the time and people at shows telling me that these words helped them through something. It's probably one of the best feelings I've had before. I'm still a regular person, just like them. I'm on the stage, and they're in the crowd, that's the only difference between us.

Visit From Autumn To Ashes at:
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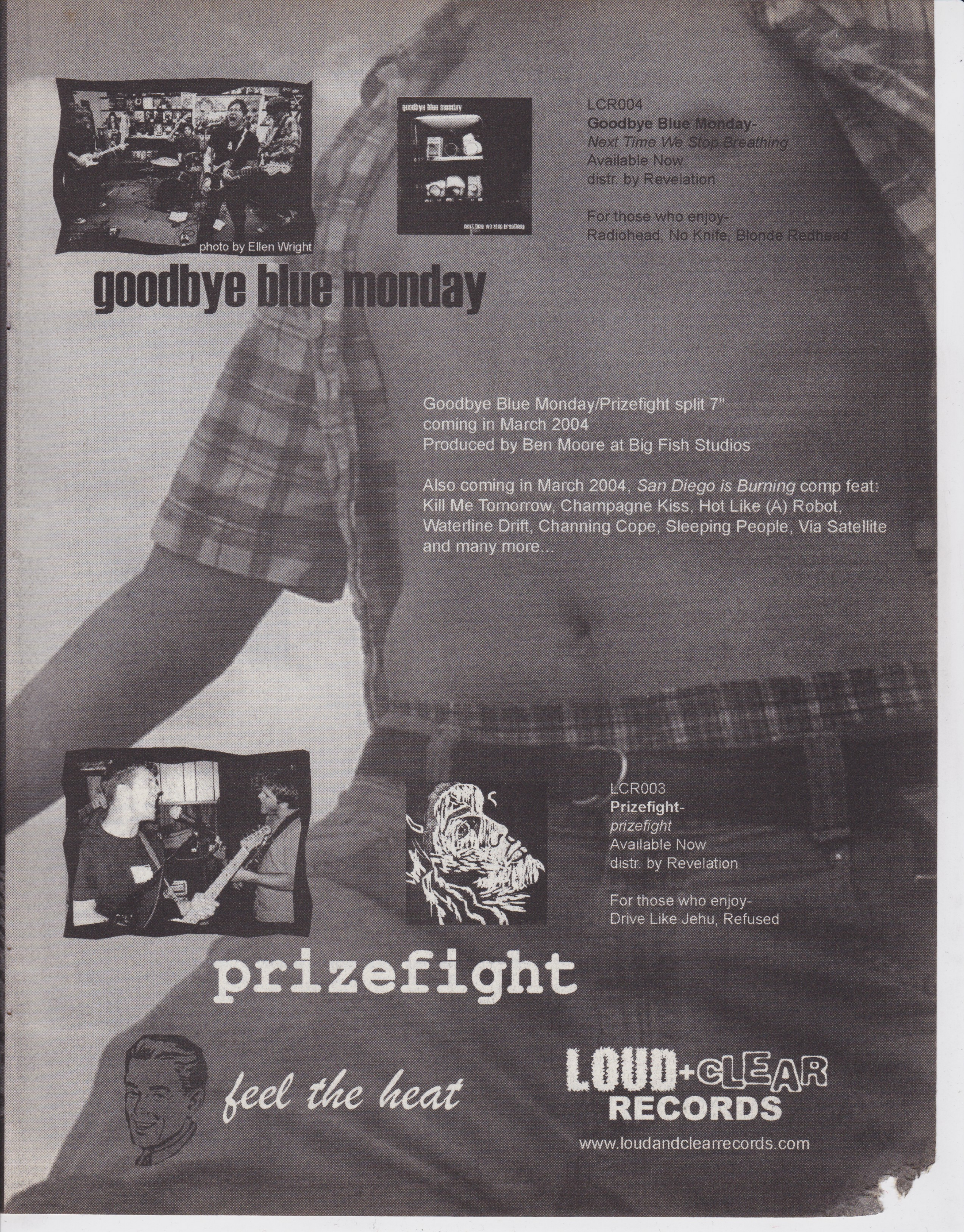
# from Autumn to Ashes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goodbye blue monday
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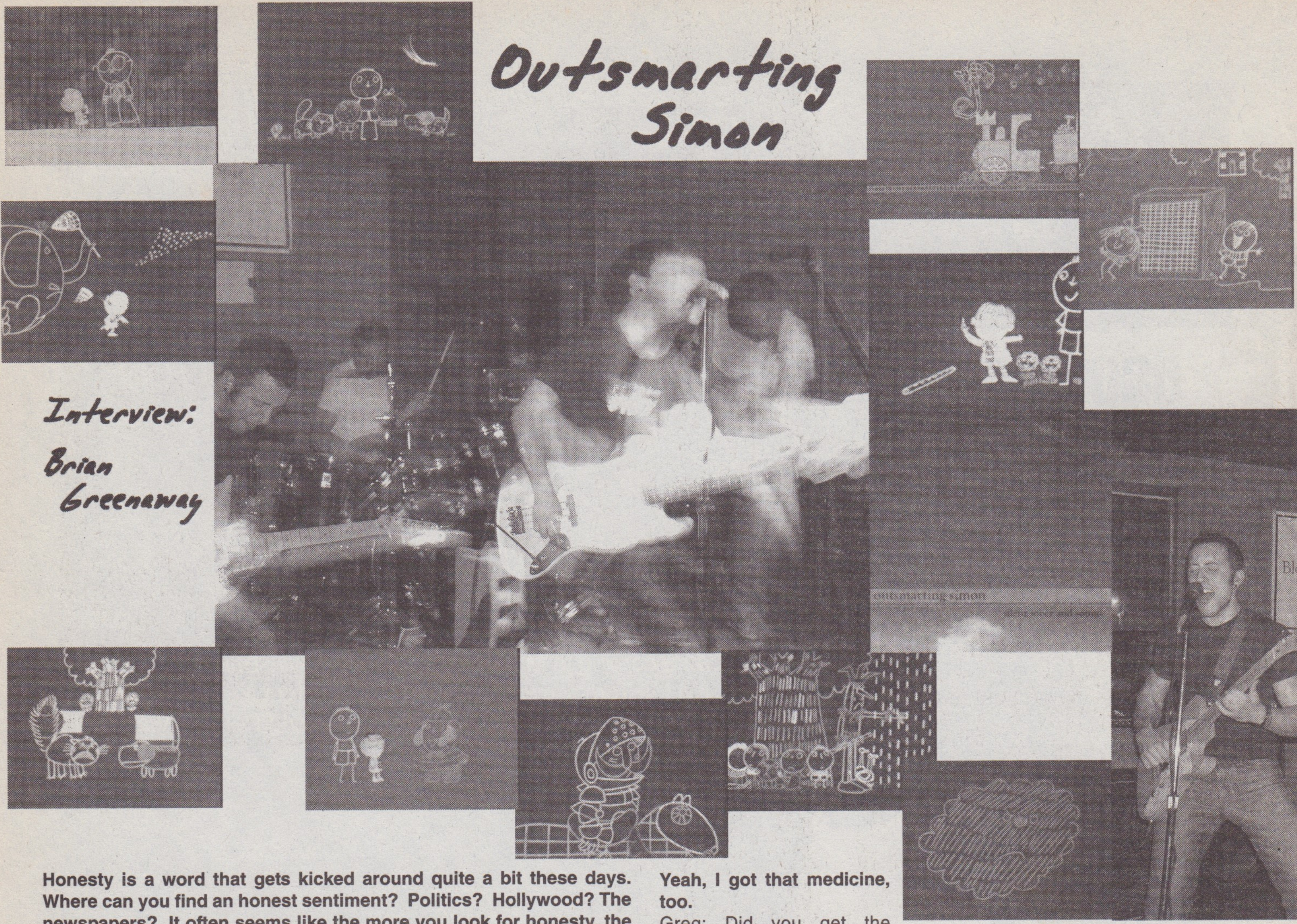
# Outsmarting Simon



Interview:

Brian Greenaway

**Honesty is a word that gets kicked around quite a bit these days. Where can you find an honest sentiment? Politics? Hollywood? The newspapers? It often seems like the more you look for honesty, the less likely you are to find it. Which, if you're like the rest of us, means you go out looking for honesty in your music. Be it the brutal truth of the ghetto's streets or the soft stylings of a simple guitar. Outsmarting Simon is an honest band from New Jersey. They're honest about being who they are, a bunch of guys who like to have fun together, drinking beer, traveling around the country with some close friends and, oh yeah, making some beautifully honest music in the process. I caught up with the foursome a few days out of New Brunswick in the cold, blinding snow.**

**So, how's the tour going?**
Brian: It's going really well. The tour is sort of in pieces and we're kind of on the first piece right now. We're in upstate New York with our good friends Denver in Dallas.
PJ: They're a great bunch of kids and everyone should be listening to them (www.denverindallas.com). They have so much passion for what they're doing.

**Who's the most annoying in the van?**
PJ: I don't think there's a most annoying guy, really. We all just have annoying habits.
Brian: Yeah right, I'm the most annoying.
PJ: I can be a really shitty person at times, too. And Greg gets really defensive if you say something negative to him. Like if you say, "You were shitty last night," he'll hit you. But Greg and I bought a gun yesterday, so everybody's pretty much in check.

**Oh shit.**
PJ: Well, it's a BB gun, it's not like a real gun. But to keep ourselves sane we've been shooting the members of Denver in Dallas.
Brian: Oh, and sometimes we take weird medicines that we shouldn't.
PJ: Yeah, we got a new one that increases your penis size and we've been charting that all out.

**Yeah, I got that medicine, too.**
Greg: Did you get the Longitude one?

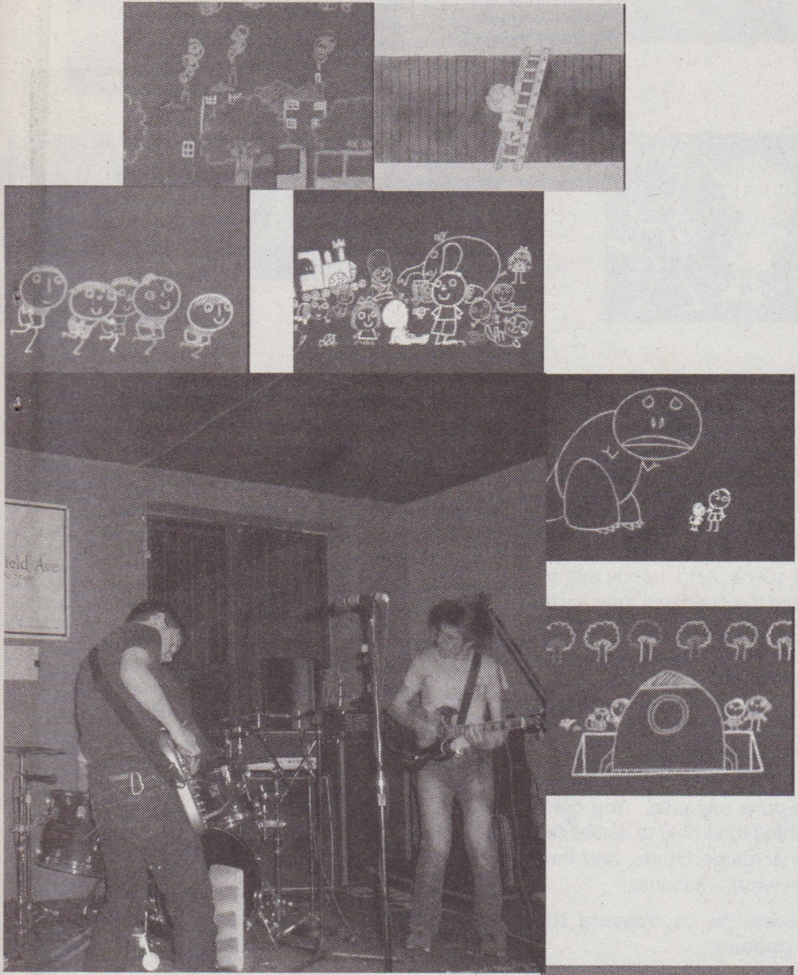
**No, I got the girth one.**
Greg: Did it work?

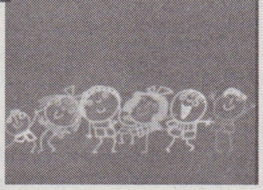
**No.**
PJ: See, we're trying to have a scientific experiment with like a flaccid and erect penis. Like we already got the before measurements and now we're going to track our progress like every day.

**All in the name of Science, I guess. Well, since you've already answered all of my penis questions, why don't you tell us about your new release, "Silent, Sober, and Sound".**
Brian: Well, we originally recorded and released the album ourselves about a year ago. So we put it out and started touring around and we kind of caught the attention of Triple Crown along the way. We'd put quite a bit of time into the album and we didn't just want to brush it aside, so we re-released it with pretty much the same artwork and everything but now we've got a reputable label pushing it, so that makes it a lot easier for us to get stuff done.

**How has it been working with Triple Crown?**
Brian: It's been awesome so far. Barry, the guy who pretty much runs everything at Triple Crown is pretty cool. We're trying to convince him that we're a bunch of weirdos but he sees through everything. He'll probably get a bunch of dead animals for Hanukkah and then our relationship with Triple Crown will go south very quickly.

**There's a lot of varied sounds on "SSS", which songs are your favorite to play?**
Brian: Um, I think "Drive By Monologue", because there's a sick drum solo.
PJ: I guess "Drive By Monologue" because it's a pretty varied song. I feel that song in particular runs the gamut of a lot of the different kinds of things that we do. I like the stuff that incorporates some drive and punch in it and you get both of those things in that song.





**Did anything about the album turn out differently than you thought it would? Is there anything that you'd rather do differently?**
PJ: On the next record I'd definitely like to work with someone who has a better idea of drum sound. Some people have listened to the record and they're using adjectives like, "sleepy" or "spacey" to describe it which isn't bad but definitely makes it sound like we're really subdued, but out live shows tend to be pretty energetic and I think the power difference in the drums is a part of the issue. Still though, the record turned out way better than we expected. It's fairly conceptual and reasonably coherent and that's a big accomplishment for a band that was pretty unheard of.

**You said Outsmarting Simon live is more of a rocking experience than is captured on the album. What exactly can we expect when we see you in California?**
Brian: Yeah, we move around tons and we're all up in each others' faces having fun. People at our shows tell us that they're fun because they can tell we're having fun doing it. There's some bands that get up there and are just like, "why even bother?" and there's other bands that sort of get off by talking shit to the kids and that's pretty fucked up. We're just kids playing music because we love it and we're happy to do it.

**So when you guys aren't doing the penis medicine and you're not playing music, what do you do?**
Brian: Oh, usually pretty terrible stuff. When we get bored we dare each other like Subway sandwiches to do stuff.

**What kind of stuff?**
PJ: Offensive things. Is Brian's mom going to read this?

**Everybody's going to read this. It's going to be huge.**
Brian: Oh man, you shouldn't say all that stuff.

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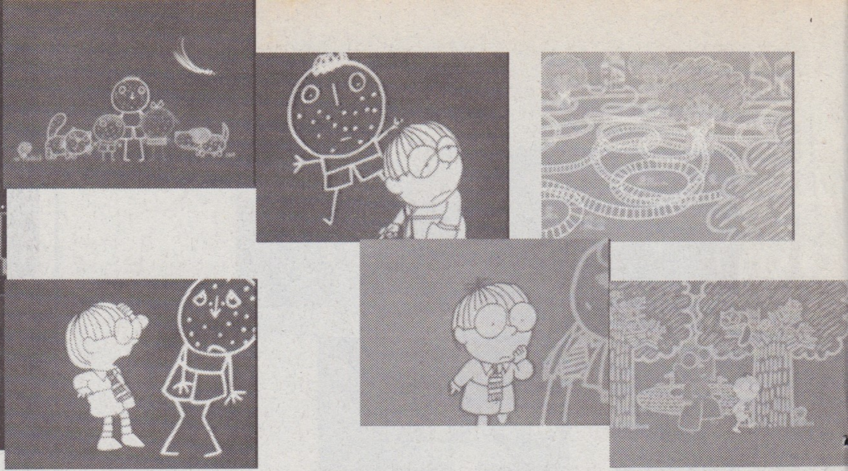


*Outsmarting Simon Interview continued...*

PJ: It's pretty horrible. Urine drinking, pants pooping. We're obnoxious twenty-something guys, you know? We're doing the same thing every other twenty-two year old is doing, really-offensive things involving alcohol and penises.

**What's the best thing about being in a band?**

PJ: I love the democracy in our band. I love taking something out of myself and combining it with the best of my band mates and making something that's much bigger than the sum of us all.

Brian: I think for me it's the ability to travel. A lot of my friends got out of school and went to some killer grad school somewhere or got some job making a lot of money and it sort of sucks that I'm living with my mom and I'm broke but I've seen some pretty cool stuff and met some pretty cool people.

**What's the worst thing?**

Brian: Being stuck in a shitty town on a shitty night. We were in Mobile, Alabama once and I ate some Popeys that gave me the shits and I hadn't talked to my mom in a while and usually being able to play cheers me up but other times it's just like, "I wanna go home." And plus, diarrhea makes everything worse.

**You guys are from New Jersey, a state known mostly for hair bands and power ballads. How does a thoughtful, progressive indie rock band come out of that environment?**

Brian: Well, it's sort of embarrassing but Poison's "Open Up and Say Ahhh" was the first record I ever bought.

**That one is sick.**

Brian: Yeah, I feel like a little bit of that influence has made it into our music, even if you'd never really notice it. There's a lot of shredding, a lot of screeching leads and sometimes when we're playing, we get down all back to back and light our guitars on fire. It's all in the pants, too.

Greg: Hey, this is a serious interview, you're not being serious enough.

Brian: Come one man, it was a goofy question I can do whatever I want. Seriously though, Jersey has a ton of pop-punk bands and it's tough to know which ones are good and which ones suck.

**Anything really bother you about the state of music right now?**

Brian: Well, you know how trends always get started by maybe one or two bands and then the rest all jump on board? That always bothers me. Take Thursday, for example. As far as that scene goes, they were doing something a little different and once they broke out and got pretty big, everyone and their mom sounds like Thursday now. It sucks the originality and creativity out of the whole scene. Also, bands that try to separate themselves from the people at their show. We've seen a lot of bands do pretty shitty things to some of the kids at their shows, like put themselves up on a pedestal and they try and create some kind of separation that takes the fun out of the whole experience.

PJ: Yeah, nothing really bothers me too much about music in general, except for some of the stuff that's happening under the pop-punk umbrella. You get a bunch of bands that are doing their best to sound like a bunch of early-mid-90s screamo bands, and they seem to be doing it for the wrong reasons.

**Yeah, a lot of bands seem to be copying the sound just because it's popular.**

PJ: Totally. I don't get it. I've never been able to write a song where I tried to sound like someone else. Believe me, I tried when I was younger, when I was listening to lots of Nirvana I tried to write like them, but it just couldn't happen because it wasn't honest. Granted, what I might write is an amalgamation of these other bands that I like, but it's still my voice and when the four of us are together we just play the music that comes out naturally.

**Right, so everything's becoming a derivative of a derivative and it loses whatever meaning it once had. So who's to blame? Bands that make the music, kids that buy it, record companies that push it, what?**

Brian: All of the above.

PJ: It's really the age-old question of pop culture, isn't it? Do people like Reality Shows or are they just popular because they're on?

**You guys get compared to just about every single band playing right now. Do you ever read any of these reviews or whatever and go like, "Oh my gosh, those guys suck! We don't sound anything like them!"**

PJ: Yeah, I usually don't know what to make of stuff like that. We were once compared to The Starting Line and...

Brian:...Dude, don't start talking shit.

PJ: No, I'm not talking shit, they're a cool band if you're into pop-punk, you know? I like that one song of theirs that goes, (falsetto) "I'm sorry girl..." you know that one? But regardless, whether you like pop-punk or not, The Starting Line sounds nothing like us. I've heard people make comparisons to Penfold, Mineral, Sunny Day Real Estate, stuff like that and I think that's okay.

**So I've been talking to you guys for a while now and I've read through your lyrics and it's pretty clear that you guys have got a decent amount going on upstairs. There's some serious thought that goes into your songs. Where does that come from?**

PJ: I think it's a lot of different things. One, we were all lucky enough to come from families where education was an important thing. Not in an oppressive sort of way or anything, but just something that was encouraged. We've all learned to love reading and because of that it's given us the opportunity to have fun but also know what's going on around us. Also, bands like Penfold, who happen to be from my hometown, write such good lyrics and I was lucky enough to grow up listening to those sentiments and now we try to emulate some of those same emotions in our own music.

**What are Outsmarting Simon's upcoming plans?**

PJ: We're in California in a few weeks, then we're home and I get my wisdom teeth out so we'll take a little break, then another short tour after that. We'd like to tour with a few bigger bands, too. We've got a goal to start playing shows of a reasonable size and we'd like to share our music with people. We're really lucky to have fans who just see us as regular people, since that's all we really are.

**Anyone you'd like to thank?**

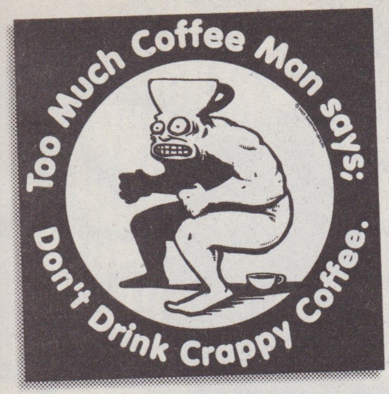
Brian: My mom.

PJ: All of our friends and all of our families for sure. And the kids, too. We don't even think of the kids as our fans, we think of them as more of our friends that we get to see when we're really lucky.

Greg: And Barry, too.

PJ: Yeah, Barry and the people who let us do what we do.

**As the van speeds through the inky night on its way to the next venue, the four young men inside continue their hi-jinks, joking and laughing as the snow continues to fall. To see when Outsmarting Simon will hit your town and to download a few selected MP3s, check out www.outsmartingsimon.com. See you at the show.**



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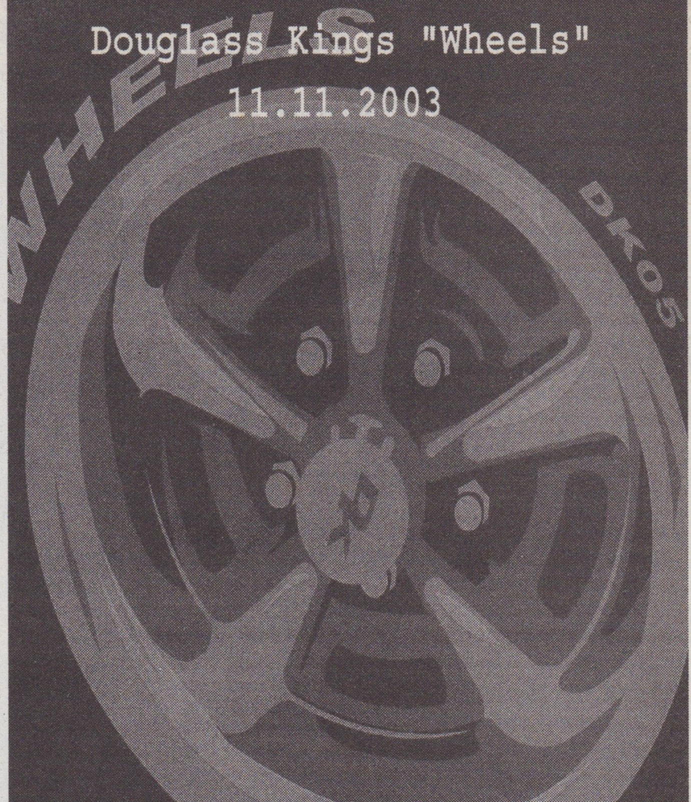

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# SLAVES ON DOPE

## MAKING A METAFOUR

by James Wright

**Getting a jumpstart in the music business has never come easy for Montreal's Slaves On Dope. Countless hours of drive time between gigs, labels folding, business partners who lied and the search for a home have plagued the band through their career.**

**Despite the bullshit that comes with it, Slaves On Dope are back with a new album and are stronger than ever. Their sophomore effort, "Metafour", hit shelves June 10, 2003, and shows the band spreading their musical wings. Returning to the sound of previous independent material, "Metafour" is angelically melodic with its rock-like beauty.**

**With a new label, new album and newfound fire, Slaves On Dope are back to claim their place on the forefront of hard rock.**

**Modern Fix had the chance to talk to Slaves On Dope throat Jason Rockman about the new record, Columbian neckties, success, the Osbournes and why it's so damn hard to find a good cup of coffee on the road.**

**You had the big start with great tours like Ozzfest and lots of promotion, then the wheels fell off. What happened?**

Jason Rockman: Well, the label went under. Sharon Osbourne lost her distribution deal for Divine through Priority Records. The whole house of cards kind of came falling down and we were just left stuck underneath it. There was really nothing we could do. We were really happy where we were and it was great to be associated with someone like Sharon Osbourne, who is a really nice lady and very powerful in this business. There was nothing we could really do about it though, we just got a call saying, "Look, the label's folded." We kind of saw it coming because when it came time to pick up the option for the second record, we kept getting a delay. So we looked at one another and said, "We have to start looking for a new home and write the best record we can." If we thought we were being criticized or scrutinized on our last album, we knew that this one was gonna be worse. People are gonna pull your sophomore effort apart in this business. Our first record was mildly successful; we sold around 70,000 copies in the US. That's pretty good considering we never received any radio support and we didn't have a video, it was just purely based on us touring. Our last record was just too heavy to be played on the radio, with this record we've definitely changed things up a bit. We just tried to make the best record we could make, no matter what label we were going to be on. We wanted to write songs that were going to be memorable.

**Did you feel like your backs were up against the wall with this record?**

To a certain degree, yeah. We're a band that people have constantly put in a corner and for us that's the worst thing to do because we always come out swinging. (Chuckles) We definitely did that on this album and if it comes out on June 10th and is a total commercial failure, I'll still be happy because I know we wrote the best record we could write. This really is a good record in my mind. We definitely put all the cards on the table with this one.

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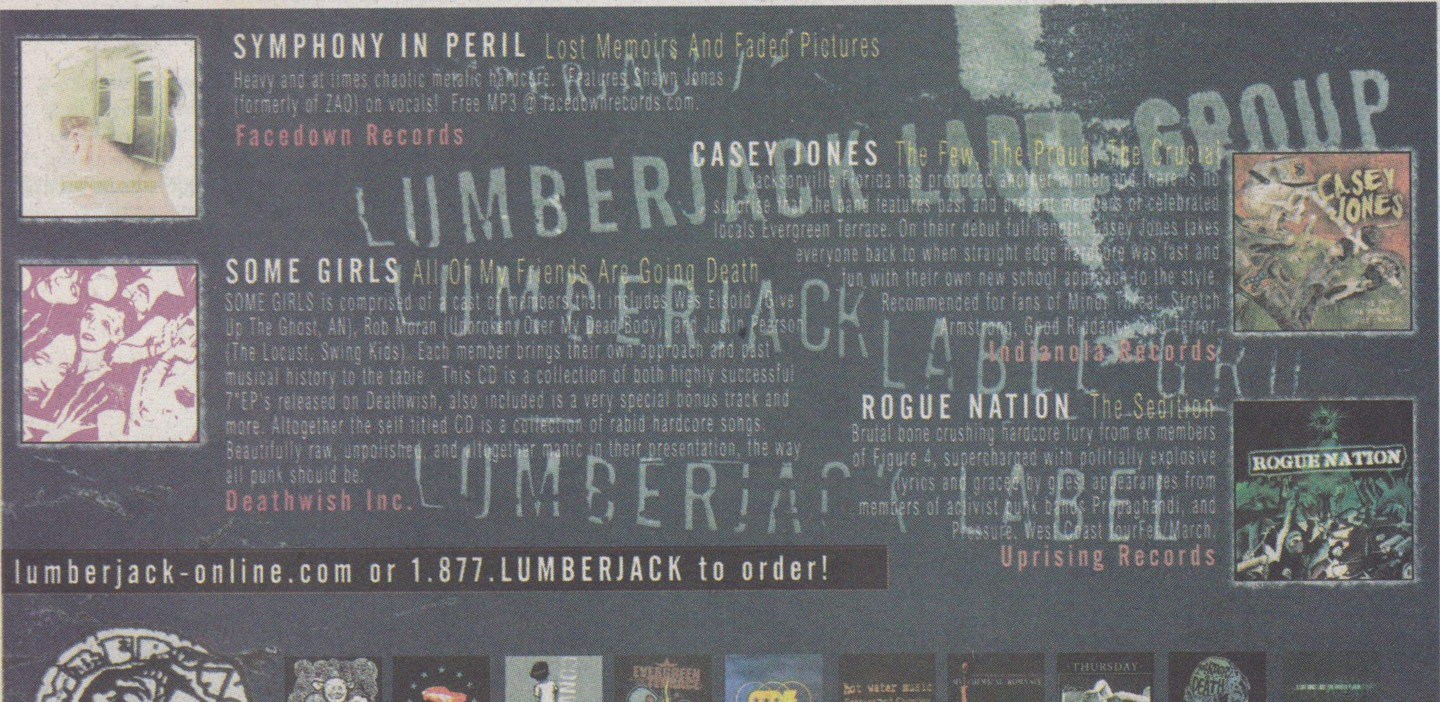

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**SOME GIRLS** All Of My Friends Are Going Death
SOME GIRLS is comprised of a cast of members that includes Wes Eisold (Give Up The Ghost, AN), Rob Moran (Unbroken, Over My Dead Body) and Justin Pearson (The Locust, Swing Kids). Each member brings their own approach and past musical history to the table. This CD is a collection of both highly successful 7"EP's released on Deathwish, also included is a very special bonus track and more. Altogether the self titled CD is a collection of rabid hardcore songs. Beautifully raw, unpolished, and altogether manic in their presentation, the way all punk should be.
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**So after the label folded, did it feel like going back to the drawing board and starting all over again?**
Definitely, but with more experience and insight. We toured all over the US, which we had never done before and at the same time, got an understanding of how this business works. The reality of this business is, it's all about songs. It's not about your live shows or how your record was promoted, if you've written good songs then you've done your job. That's what we focused on when writing this record. We have some songs on this record that are really outside, but that's always what we've been about. If you listen to some of our older independent stuff, like "One Good Turn Deserves Another", that stuff is all over the place. We really tried to get back to that with this record. We're really influenced by bands like Faith No More. They just did whatever songs they wanted to do. They had the attitude of not trying to be the heaviest band or the most melodic band, they just wrote. I love that attitude.

**During your downtime, how did you manage to keep spirits high when times were tough?**
Just being thankful for things that really matter, like family, friends and health. I'm a real simple guy and unfortunately sometimes life can complicate that. I went through a lot of changes between the last record and this one. It's obvious on the record that I did a lot of soul searching with this one. I came out afterwards a much happier person too. I kept my spirits high by just staying grounded because this business is a roller coaster and if you get caught up in it, you'll lose who you are. I do very normal things when I'm back at home like working a day job, hanging out with friends, going to comic book conventions or going to the movies.

**Are you still in contact with the Osbourne clan?**
We see Jack and Kelly every once and a while. We never really had that much contact with Ozzy, but when we did he was always really cool to us. With us it was always business. We do owe them a lot for giving us a shot and giving us our legs. They're really great people.

**What was it like seeing them become America's favourite TV family?**
Yeah, it's pretty freaky. It's very true though because how people see them on TV is how they really are. Their life is crazy. It's weird because I still remember Kelly coming down to the studio and hanging out with us when we were recording our record. She actually took a pair of my Adidas and put rhinestones down the side of them for me. She is just the sweetest girl and Jack is a great kid too. They're just really nice people. Underneath all the stardom and fame is just a really great group of people.

**How did Bieler Bros. come into the picture?**
Just through looking for another label. We were doing a demo with Troy and Jason Slater out in L.A and we decided to put the feelers out ourselves because our manager at the time was shopping us to record labels for six months. We found out later that he was just taking our demos and sitting on them, which was pretty disheartening. We ended up hooking up with Bieler Bros. because Jason Slater did the Twisted Method record for MCA. From there Frank went down to a Nonpoint show, met Bieler, and gave him a CD. He was blown away by our demo and signed us right on the spot. He heard "So Clear", "Drain Me" and "Go" and signed us based on that. He told us he had the label through MCA and a studio in Florida and we didn't want to wait any longer to record. We did the record before Christmas and here we are.

**Does it make you feel good to know you're with a label that cares about the music instead of sales numbers?**
Fuck yeah! I'm not putting down major labels but I've always loved having people in our corner who are working hard and believe in you, not people who look at some release sheet and say, "Hey, we have to do something with this." It's a great feeling knowing there are people working with you who care and believe in what you're doing. Our label in France is like that too. We're on a label over there called MTS and they do a lot of death metal and heavy stuff. They have a couple of bands in our vein but they're really just a small little outfit that knows how to promote. We went over there for three days and did press and didn't get a minute to do anything but talk to press. We were on such a tight schedule that I had 30 minutes with each person and if we went over that I had to go onto the next person because we were on such a tight schedule. They did a good job and they really care about the album. You could tell each press person had really listened to the album before the interview as well.

**The material on this record is much more like your earlier independent efforts, very melodic. Why the change?**
Well, we've always had a melodic point of view, even on "Inches From The Mainline". That record still had this pop sensibility, except I was screaming all the time. If you listen to a lot of hardcore bands you'll hear them scream until you can't hear what song is what. Our album you could tell what every song was, it was just really heavy. I think what we did was use my voice more on this one. I love screaming and the energy it brings forth, but when you can sing, I just think you might as well, and I can sing. It wasn't like we were this heavy band and I had to go take singing lessons to learn how to sing so we could get played on the radio. We've always had this side to our music, but we were just really pissed off on our last record.

**Is the track "Poster Boy" about you realizing your dreams of making it in this business?**
That song is very similar to "Thanks For Nothing" from our last album. It's kind of about me looking out and feeling that pressure of having to always be on. People expect me to be the singer of Slaves On Dope, rather than Jason. It's just about people looking at you and thinking, "Look at him. He's living the dream. He's got a lot of money, bangs lots of chicks and does lots of drugs." and it's not like that at all. No, I don't make a lot of money. (Laughs) No, I don't fuck a lot of chicks. No, I don't do a lot of drugs.

SLAVESONDOPE

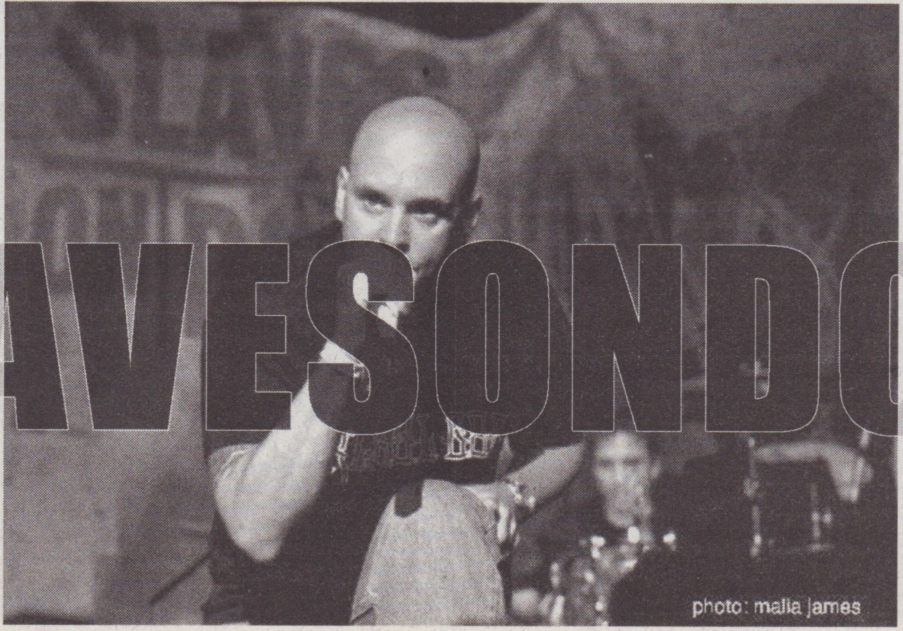


photo: malia james

I really do this because I love what I do. A lot of people hold you up as this poster boy who does these things everyday. You're not really a person or an individual; you're just a poster. I think when I wrote that song I was feeling a lot of pressures of writing another record and I was torn between my personal life and my band life. I just wanted to capture that moment.

**So do you think a lot of people expect you to be this over the top rock personality when they meet you?**
A lot of people meet me after the show and say, "Wow. You're nothing like you are on stage." Rightfully so, because that's my job and I have to sell it. I offer that as an outlet for my own personal demons and when I get off stage I leave it there and that surprises some people. I can't get caught up in all the bullshit because before you know it, I'll be telling my band to fuck off because I'm starting a solo project. (Laughs) That would involve me pulling an Edwin and I don't wanna do that. Goddamn, I Mother Earth was a great band and they should've stayed together. I loved how they just didn't give a fuck about anything and wrote whatever they felt like writing. Then they split up, went in completely separate directions and both fucking sucked!

**I don't know because I think that Bryon is a great singer and brought new life to IME. I will agree that the first I Mother Earth record was great, but I hated "Scenery and Fish".**
For me it's like Van Halen. I Mother Earth has their Sammy Hager, and yeah, they're cool, but get Dave back. (Laughs) It's just my opinion and opinions are like assholes. Everybody's got one. I just wish that band would get back together. "Scenery and Fish" was great to me.

**"Casualty of Me" is probably the high point on the album for me.**
That song is really personal to me, so I probably won't get too much into it. That's always been a conscious decision on my part and that's why I've never wanted to put a copy of the lyrics into our CD's. I hate putting lyrics into packaging because I think it takes away from someone's interpretation of the song. I think it makes it a little bit too obvious. Imagine going to an art gallery and seeing a painting with a description of what it means and exactly how the artist felt when he painted it. You don't wanna know all that because it ruins it. You wanna take it for what it is. With this record, I didn't want any of lyrics printed in the booklet and I know that will piss some people off because they wanna know what I'm saying, but I think it takes away from the art. To get back to "Casualty Of Me", that song was written in regards to a tough moment I had with someone. I realized I could become a casualty and that sometimes you can create these huge scenarios out of something little. Sometimes if you go down that road, it doesn't lead to anywhere but a negative place. I realized that I was blowing things out of proportion and came to the conclusion that it wasn't going to get any easier if I kept going down that road.

**"Columbian Ascot" plays out almost like something out of the movies. Like "Scarface" or "Traffic".**
Well a Columbian necktie is where they cut your neck from ear to ear and pull your tongue out. That's how they killed people in the Columbian underworld and that's what they would leave as their calling card. That song was written about a former manager who forged our signatures on a document and stole $18,000 from us. That was really written out of frustration from that. We wanted to call it "Columbian Necktie" but an ascot is one of those little neckties like the guy in "Scooby-Doo" wears. That song is definitely dedicated to him. The song is a nod to those old mob films though. There's a movie called "Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia" and it's kind of a nod to that. It's like when you have a pact or trust someone, you didn't need a contract or anything, just a handshake. Then there's that violent side of you that wants to just lash out when someone breaks that. I didn't actually go and do this to the person, I just thought about it. (Laughs)

**Does the nasty side of the business sometimes sour your love of music?**
Definitely. It's not "show friends", it's "show business" and that's the truth. It's too bad because we're all just a bunch of artists looking to get our point across and there's this nasty business side. You have to play the game or you'll never get your art out there. Everyone wants to have their art reach as many people as possible and it hurts when someone gets in the way. It's an aspect of my career that I'm not really comfortable with but I just have to deal with it.

**So is it like you have to split yourself between the artist and the businessman?**
Definitely. When you have someone who works very close with you, like a manager, who was almost like a fifth member, when they betray you it hurts. It's a real hard thing to have to go through, but like I say in the song, "What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger." It really does.

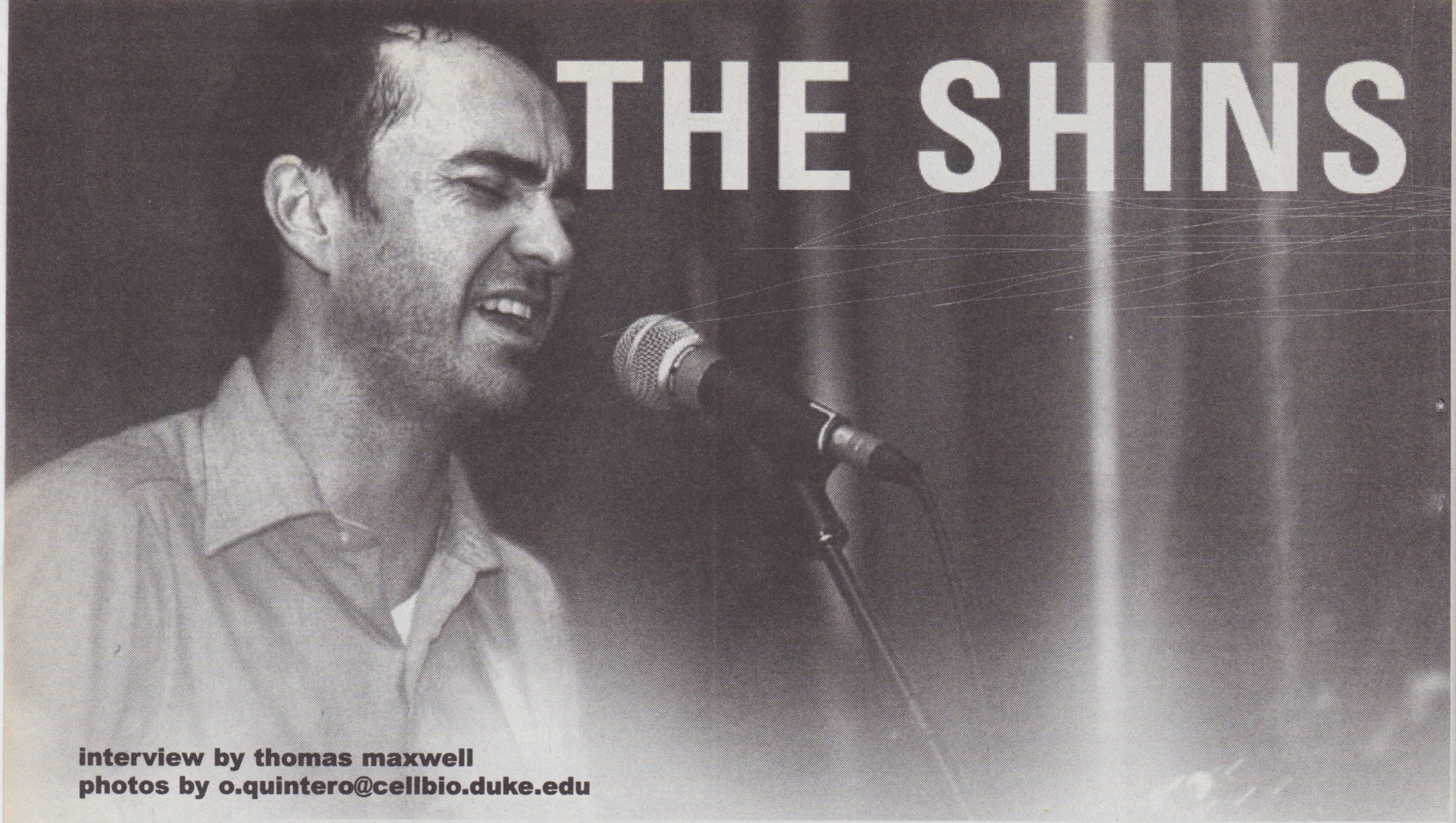
**"Caffeine Love Affair": was that written as a tribute to coffee?**
Jason: I'm a drunk! (Laughs) I drink a lot of coffee.

**So then whose coffee are you partial to?**
I really like Second Cup, but obviously out here in the US, Starbucks is king. Tim Horton's does have good coffee and when you're doing that long stretch on the 401 from Montreal to Toronto, it's great. I've probably pissed in every Tim Horton's bathroom on that strip! Tim Horton's rocks but I much prefer Starbuck's or Second Cup.

**Is it hard to find a good cup of coffee when you're on the road?**
Oh, yeah. That's why you have to succumb to Starbucks when on the road. There's a reason that #2 [from "Austin Powers"] put all that money into Starbucks for Doctor Evil, it's a great chain.

**So what was it like working with Jason Slater & Troy Van Leeuwen on this record?**
They were both very different people. Troy and I got along great because he's an artist and Jason is more of a businessperson. For the most part, though, in the studio it was just Troy and us, and we hit it off. I have a lot of respect for Troy and for the things he's done. What he did with A Perfect Circle and Queens of the Stone Age is amazing. If he manages to stay on the next Queens record, what he can bring to the table is just amazing. He has another band called Enemy and it's just amazing. People don't understand what he has to offer. He's a great songwriter and really helped me build up the harmonies and melodies on this record. We're a really hands-on band and know what we wanted to do, so Troy just really helped when recording. He really helped me during the vocals because a lot of these songs are very personal and he just made me comfortable. I really just needed someone who was easygoing and made me feel as comfortable as possible. He really gave me the confidence to just go for it.

**Have you set any goals for the band with the release of this record?**
We just want to go out in the world and play for people. I think we want to expand on our already existing fan base and play as much as we can. The record is gonna do whatever it's gonna do. That's not in my hands; it's in God's hands now. (Laughs) I think there's a notable change on this record, but a lot of people really liked the parts on the last record where I sang on, like "Fallout". People kept telling me, "You have a great voice. Why don't you sing more?" I heard that so much while out on the road, that I just staring thinking, "Why don't I?" There are some songs on there for the people that want to hear me scream like I did on the last one, but I think this album is about us. We never planned anything or sat there and said, "This will get us radio play!" We only worry about writing good songs and so far from the reaction we've got, we seem to have accomplished that. That's all we can hope for. I know we did our job and I think now it's just up to "Metafour" to take its own legs and see how far it walks.



# THE SHINS

**interview by thomas maxwell**
**photos by o.quintero@cellbio.duke.edu**

**The day I found out I would be interviewing one of my favorite bands I was very excited. That night when I got home from work I pulled out my shinny blue see-through LP ("Oh, Inverted World" the Shins first record) and went to town. I'm sort of compulsive, so I listened to the half-hour album five times that night. I notice new imbedded tracks and sounds each time I listen to that magical album. Then I pulled out one of their EPs "Know Your Onion" followed by the Postal Service's first EP with a cover by the Shins of "We Will Become Like Silhouettes". All of these records put me in my "happy place" where all my problems seem generic and petty. The Shins formula of a dense foundation in acoustic guitars, smooth as silk bass lines, methodical jocular drumming, shimmering keys, and wonderfully intense vocals embody what pop music is and what it always has been. James Mercer is undoubtedly proving that there are other intenselyintimate indie writers that people can identify with on a Blake Schwarzenbach level. You can really listen to James and create a deep understanding of his qualms and thoughts. I just find myself agreeing with his observations and ideas much more than any writer in quite a while. The new album, turn it on, close your eyes, smile, and try not to keep the wonderful pop melodies from infecting your brain.**

**TM: What's up man, how's the weather over there in Portland? Are you suffering from seasonal depression yet?**
JM: It's not quite rainy and stuff yet. It's been really windy and strange.

**Let's talk about the new album, how much of Chutes Too Narrow is based on childhood memories and experiences?**
Hmm, what do I have in there, I mean I think there's always a little of that stuff. I think I'd have to look at the lyrics, let me grab the record. I think I did a little bit less of the childhood memories stuff on this record

**As opposed to "Oh, Inverted World"?**
Yeah, "Oh, Inverted World" had a lot of, like "One By One All Day" is sort of a whole mixed bag of memories of my childhood. But yeah, I don't think there is so much of the childhood memories on this album. "Pink Bullets" is sort of looking back on one of the first girls I ever dated. It's just sort of fond memories in a way.

**Was your childhood an awkward part of your life?**
I don't know, I was a pretty shy sort of kid. I moved around a lot because my dad was in the Air Force so we were always changing posts.

**Is that how you met Neal?**
I guess in a way yeah. I met Neal in Albuquerque when my dad was assigned to Kirtland Air Force base.

**Is self reflection an important part of your writing?**
Yeah definitely and I think that most of my work is about personal sort of things and sort of reflecting on my own thoughts and behavior.

**I personally liked the folky feeling of tracks like Pink Bullets and the steel guitar used on Gone For Good. It seems like all of indie music is moving to this grass roots appreciation and you guys sort of embody this movement. What do you think of this?**
It sort of less modern I guess. I think it depends on the band. As a band you need to figure out what it is that's unique about yourselves. I think sometimes it's a little depressing for me to go and see a band that's obviously trying to emulate some other band's uniqueness.

**"Bite somebody's style"?**
Yeah exactly. It never comes off well I don't think and at best it's usually a stage they're going through and hopefully eventually they'll figure out what they're really about. So I think some bands are modern that do totally new stuff and they're sort of a new sound that they created themselves. Then other bands there's something about there nature and they're into older bands and are influenced by that. Just as long as you're doing what you really ought to naturally be doing, I think that is what's most important.

**Were you hoping the new album would be danceable and do you think it is?**
(laughing) I don't know, I don't think it is danceable.

**Do you wish it was?**
I never really write with the idea of doing a dance number but I'd like to try I guess. I think that would be pretty cool. I love dance music and I like to dance, but yeah I don't know, I don't think it's much of a dance album.

**Was it hard for you to say goodbye to Neal Langford since he was one of the cofounders of the band?**
Yeah, actually he wasn't one of the cofounders of the Shins. He definitely was a cofounder of Flake, but the Shins was really Jessie and I and Dave who is back in the band and Marty.

**So Dave actually was the original bassist. That's kind of crazy.**
Yeah I know, it's like at ever turn of events with this band is confusing because people are really confused about how we changed from Flake to the Shins when in reality we didn't change from Flake to the Shins.

**(interrupting) Exactly, that was going to be my next question, what was up with the name change and why did you choose the shin, I mean there's a lot of body parts.**
(laughing) What happened what, the Shins was going along while Flake was still existing so it was totally two separate bands. The Shins was a totally separate idea it was going to be pop songs as opposed to jamming out indie rock and it ended up through a series of coincidences that we got Neal in the band and he was a great bass player, but it was coincidental that we had all been in Flake. (If you are still confused, three of the four members of Flake remain in the Shins with the Exception of Neal Langford who was replaced by Dave Hernandez formerly of Sacred of Chaka)

**Okay, so if you had to compare, I mean, I was a listener of Flake after the Shins had already started, but even though they are different bands and there are obviously different feelings in the songs the main difference I see is acoustic guitar as opposed to electric guitar.**
Yeah, I can see that, production wise you mean right? Yeah that's true man, I don't know, Flake…

**(interrupting) To me, the Shins really get your singing abilities and expert song craft out where as in Flake it was more about the rock, it was more about the instruments.**
Yeah totally, and that's what I kind of miss about Flake because it was kind of cool to go back and forth with guitars.

**You never really answered my question why the shin?**
The first time I ever heard that name was in a musical called "The Music Man" and the mayor of this town, Gary, was mayor Shin so there's scenes where people are like 'are the Shins here?' or 'where are the Shins?' and so you hear it a lot. Something about it sounded kind of random and strange and it has this sort of Irish feel to it (he's Irish). It's mainly the randomness of it. I don't like it when a band's name gives too much information.

**Is there any type of music you've ever wanted to make, but just haven't gotten around to it?**
I have actually always wanted to do some dance music. I've been talking to Jimmy Tamborello from Dntel (and the Postal Service) about possibly singing on a record...

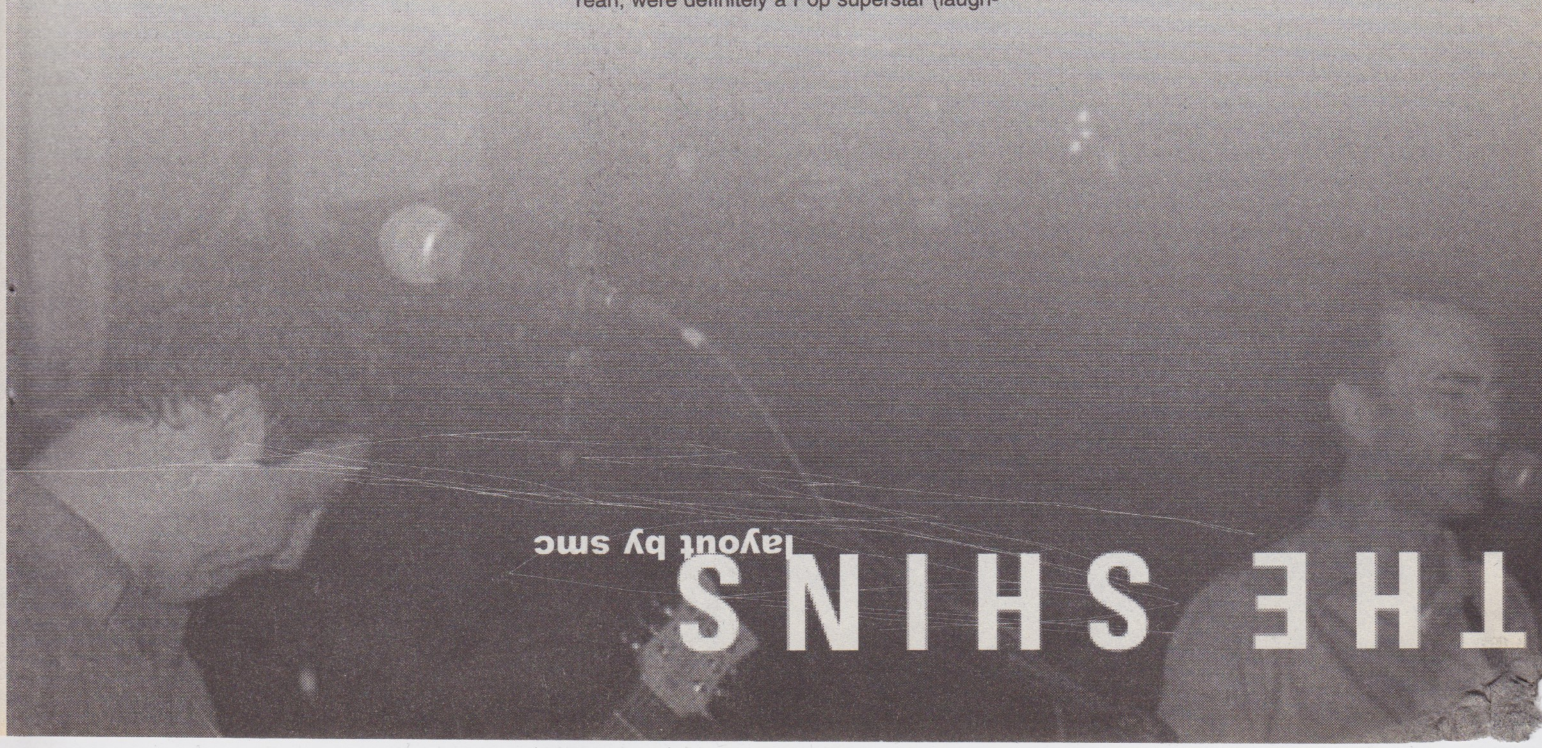
**Would you consider yourselves part of the new SubPop superstars with the Postal Service, Iron & Wine, the Thermals and former labelmates Hot Hot Heat rounding out the line-up? What changed over at SubPop?**
Yeah, were definitely a Pop superstar (laughing). I don't know what changed at SubPop. I think that what happened in the mid nineties is SubPop realized that their attempt at becoming a major label and their philosophy that if you simply act like a major label that you will become a major label has failed. And so they got a little more realistic about the company and sort of made the company more efficient. They sort of stripped it down and there was a lot of personnel changes so there are new people there who are very hip and sort of understand what is cool in music right now and they are sort of changing what SubPop has always meant to people and it's working wonders.

**That version of that song and then hearing Iron & Wine on the same single sort of proved that any type of song can be made into another type of song (in this case a techno/dance song into a retro 60's rock and acoustic folk song).**
Yeah if it is a good song and that is why I think the Postal Service is doing well. I don't think it's so much that they are doing indie dance music I think the songs are really good.

**Look, I work in an office and I've heard you knock us white-collar fascists. What was it that you liked least about working in an office?**
I think I'm just lazy or something. I worked every day pretty much since I was fifteen until about two years ago when we started touring enough to make some money. I never really enjoyed working for other people.

**Touring plans for the near future?**
We're going out to New York for a week on Monday to do CMJ and a bunch of in stores and we'll be playing at Maxwell's. And then we're touring in November in the States. We're playing at the All Tomorrow's party in LA.

**Check out the Shins on the SubPop website at www.subpop.com**



# Society 1 Enter LORD NEXUS

By James Wright
Layout by Raquel Maihofer

**Matt Zane is probably one of the most interesting people you'll ever encounter. Establishing him in the adult film industry with such classics as "Cherry Poppers" and "Backstage Sluts", Matt has been praised and credited as an innovator within the field. Despite his accomplishments in the adult world, Matt has always been a musician at heart. When fronting the L.A-based Society 1, Matt transforms into his alter ego known only as Lord Nexus. Speaking with "Modern Fix", Matt was able to shed some light onto who Lord Nexus is, and the rumors surrounding him and his exploits in the adult film world.**

**You started out in the adult film industry and branched out into music, independent film and spoken word. Were you always a creative person?**
Actually I had a very overactive imagination as a child. Creation is an outlet for the fire it creates within my core level of existence. Creation is a necessity.

**At what age did you feel the need to create?**
At the age of five I was fascinated with expressive movement. This was before my knowledge of Shamanistic practices. I guess this would be considered the beginning of the creation process.

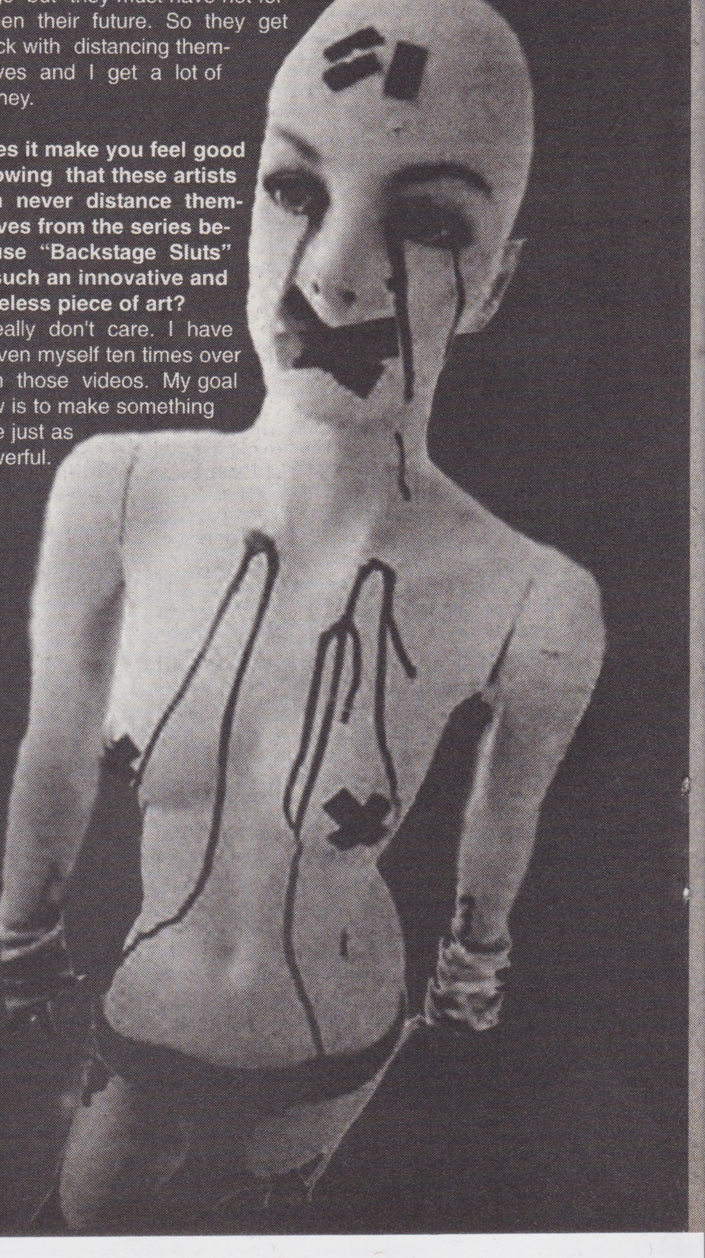
**You have a pretty unconventional background. Your father was an adult film director. What was it like growing up with you father being a part of the industry?**
He was never around. He really didn't have any influence on my upbringing except the influence of absence. It really doesn't matter because later in life I discovered he wasn't my biological father.

**Are you tired of being the one connected to the "Backstage Sluts" series?**
No. I find it amusing that something that I did as blatant ploy for money and fame has worked so well with so little effort.

**What do you think of artists like Fred Durst, Papa Roach and Mark McGrath, who have publicly felt the need to severe their ties to the series?**
What do I care? They are pussies. They have to distance themselves because the films are more powerful than their music.

**Was there a point during the filming of those videos that you thought they might create such turmoil and media attention?**
I knew and it was the plan all along. I also knew that the artists I was interviewing were going to be huge but they must have not foreseen their future. So they get stuck with distancing themselves and I get a lot of money.

**Does it make you feel good knowing that these artists can never distance themselves from the series because "Backstage Sluts" is such an innovative and timeless piece of art?**
I really don't care. I have proven myself ten times over with those videos. My goal now is to make something else just as powerful.



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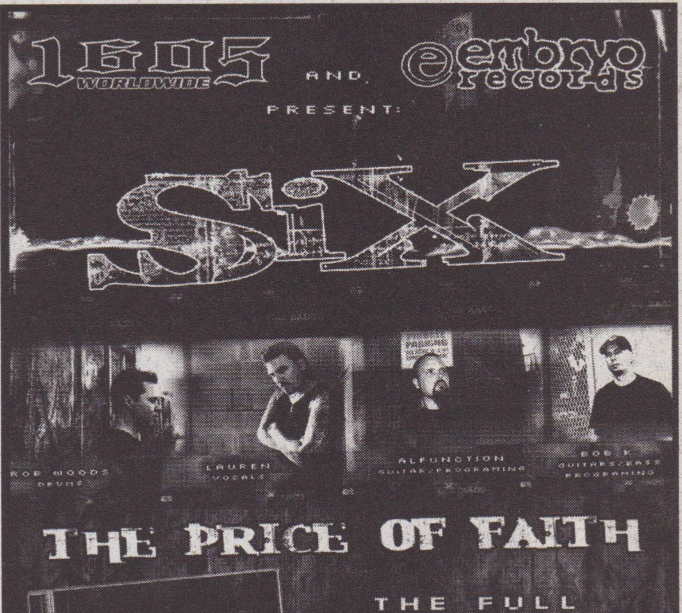

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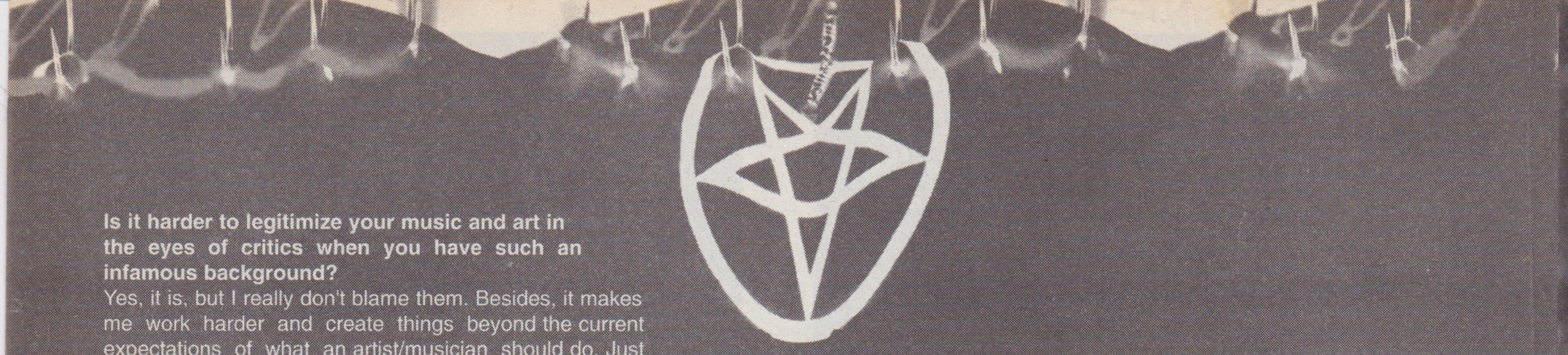


**Is it harder to legitimize your music and art in the eyes of critics when you have such an infamous background?**

Yes, it is, but I really don't blame them. Besides, it makes me work harder and create things beyond the current expectations of what an artist/musician should do. Just look at my track record. 80 adult films, two music videos, an independent film, two Society 1 records, a spoken word record, five video magazines and a soon-to-be-released book entitled "Release And Demise".

**"Exit Through Fear" was originally recorded independently and then you chose to rerecord with an entirely new band. Why did you choose to spend all the cash to rerecord it?**

The first record was horrible. The original guys that played on it were so fucked on substances they could barely play the parts. Technology can only fix so much. Add in some over-developed egos and you have a recipe for destruction.

**Do you think the rerecording was absolutely necessary in order to make an album like this?**

Yes, I do. The first version as I said wasn't very good. As soon as the other members left I knew that I didn't want a record with the old guys on it. Plus they probably would have sued me.

**Do you mind explaining the concept "Exit Through Fear"?**

It's a very basic concept. Use fear as a guide to higher states of consciousness. I have three guides in life: desire, lust and fear. This is about Mr. Fear.

**Who came up with the idea to suspend you in the air using meat hooks for the video for "Nothing"?**

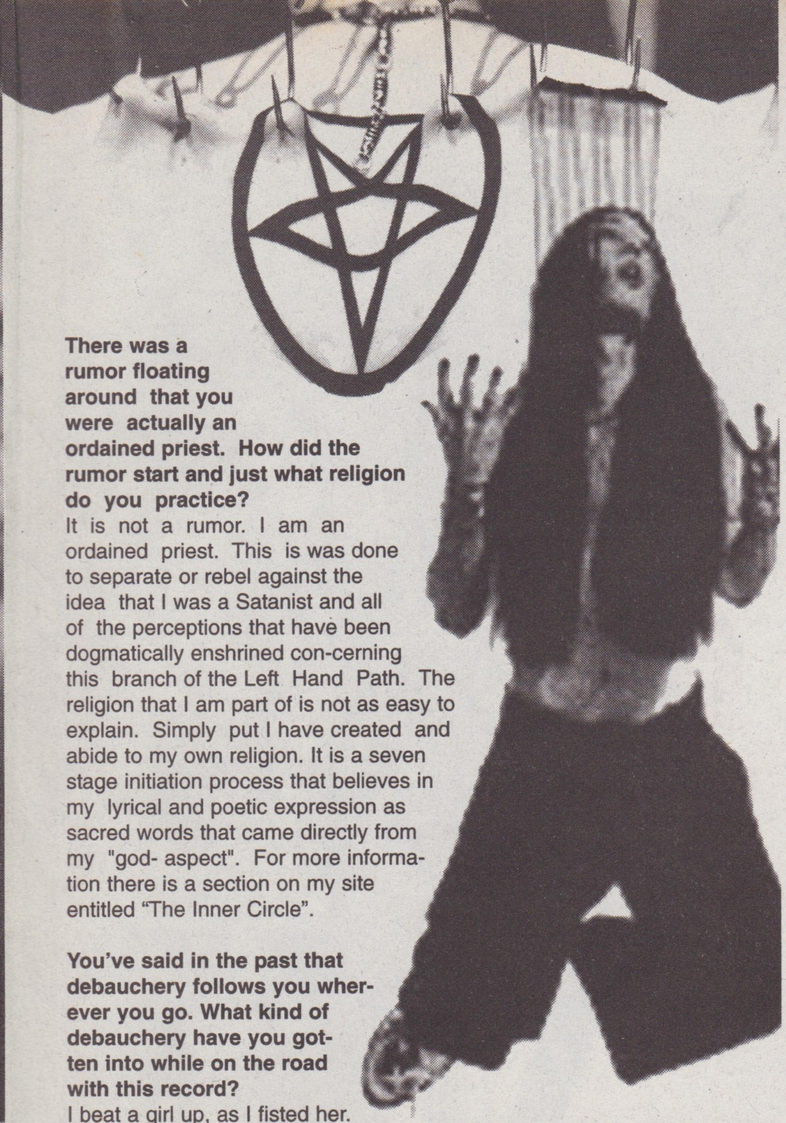
I thought of it. I have known the professional suspension artist Joey Strange for a couple of years and he always fascinated me. I thought this would be a striking way to reintroduce the awe-inspiring artistic aspect to the music video once again. This is something more than a glorified commercial. They had a day of preparation with the piercers, plus a couple of meetings beforehand. I abstained from the orgasm or any type of release for a few weeks previous to the shooting. Plus I increased my meditational practices and yoga. This was more than a video for me. I incorporated an initiatory magical process within the filming.

**What is the difference between Matt Zane and Lord Nexus?**

Matt Zane is dead. He existed in this fleshy shell until 27. Lord Nexus is a creation brought into existence during the suspension rite. The Lord Nexus has no god or father and abides to nothing except his own sense of ethics.

**You've mentioned that you've gained knowledge of Shamanistic practices; do you mind sharing some of what you learned and how you use it?**

The actual techniques I will not discuss, but I use the practices live to bring about a journey to a specific destination. I engage the subjective mind in a separate journey than the objective mind. Within the concert all our bodies reside, but we go many places as a group with me as a guide.



**There was a rumor floating around that you were actually an ordained priest. How did the rumor start and just what religion do you practice?**
It is not a rumor. I am an ordained priest. This is was done to separate or rebel against the idea that I was a Satanist and all of the perceptions that have been dogmatically enshrined con-cerning this branch of the Left Hand Path. The religion that I am part of is not as easy to explain. Simply put I have created and abide to my own religion. It is a seven stage initiation process that believes in my lyrical and poetic expression as sacred words that came directly from my "god- aspect". For more information there is a section on my site entitled “The Inner Circle”.

**You’ve said in the past that debauchery follows you wherever you go. What kind of debauchery have you gotten into while on the road with this record?**
I beat a girl up, as I fisted her. This is before I fucked her in the ass. She wanted it. She needed to feel the pain of The Lord Nexus.

**Does the idea of mainstream success appeal to Matt Zane and Society 1?**
Well, I don't want or expect to go and hang out with Britney Spears or Fred Durst. I just want to continue to create, inspire and disrupt. The idea of deconstructing the mainstream, then reconstructing it to my predilections, is appealing.

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Yeah, we are as cool as Bladerunner.

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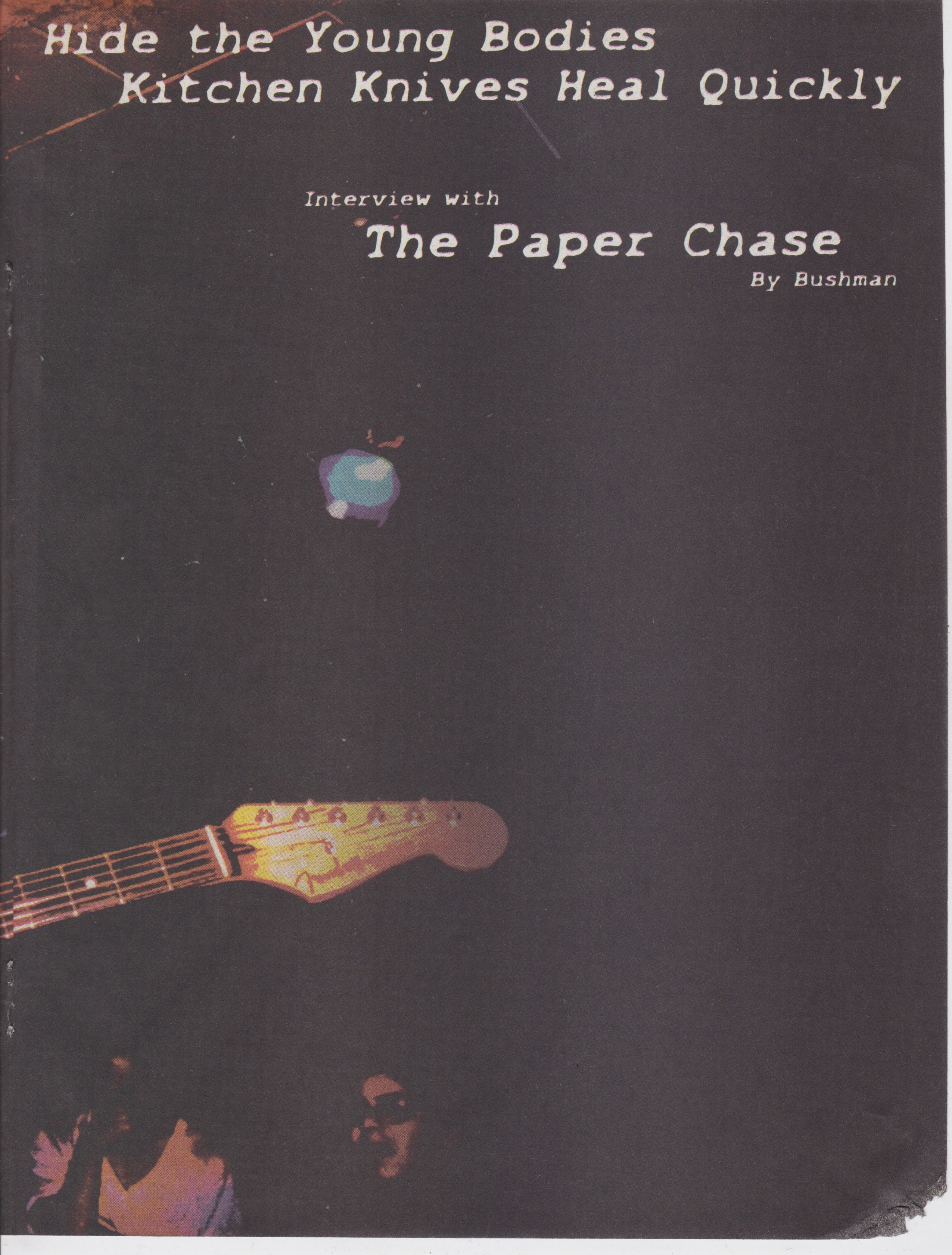
# Hide the Young Bodies Kitchen Knives Heal Quickly

## Interview with The Paper Chase

By Bushman



# the paper chase

**Did you ever do a drug then wish you didn't? That uneasy feeling of your first acid trip... trying to make sense of a world that has suddenly and uneasily shifted and now everything is hard to process. It's with that aftertaste of askew directions that The Paper Chase dose you hard on. Disjointed. Maybe it's the intentionally off-key, off kilter and constantly struggling for breath vocal pleadings of John Congleton. Perhaps it's the ugly bass stomps and creepy insecurity in the delivery of the music. Disillusioned. Those manic and repeating noisy elements of the rhythms constantly arguing with each other don't make things any more comfortable. Distracted. Pounding louder and louder just to be heard. Justifying their existence even though they suspect they shouldn't be there in the first place. Cello, Piano and some horns are welded into the mix. Tones are less constructed and emanate their feelings of dismay. Diverted. It's an exposing sense of not being afraid to sound beautifully repellent. Deliver. Advancing on two full lengths, "Young Bodies Heal Quickly" and their acclaimed follow-up, "Hide the Kitchen Knives" The Paper Chase will be releasing three more songs on a EP to be released by Southern Records American in January of the new year entitled, "What Big Teeth You Have". This is just a teaser (since two of the three songs are covers) of things to come with a yet-untitled full length to be released this spring on their new American home, Kill Rock Stars.**

**But if past releases are any indication, The Paper Chase will continue to deliver these disjointed tempos upon beautifully ugly indie rock stomps. In singer John Congleton's words: "It's the sound of everything falling apart; the sound of frustration, the sound of wanting and rejecting love, life, death." It's the idea that anything can happen, and that anything can go wrong. Strained vocal chords only add to the urgency. The music strips itself bare often, distilling itself down to just one or two elements of the band, to expose something raw and uncomfortable. The Paper Chase has a tendency to find awkward sounds and twist them into significant rhythmic elements of their songs. The bass tone nods to the Jesus Lizard while Pink Floyd pianos do their best to add a dose of melody across the stumbling, gruff percussions. It all rolls up into a big ball of musical drugs, dangerous and fun.**

**Texas native John Congleton is the driving force behind the lyrics, guitars, keyboards, sampling and most of the song construction for The Paper Chase. He is also a notable producer having garnered some accolades for his work on the band 90 Day Men.**

I've done three records for them. They've always been quick albums. Not too special as far as processes doing an album. I've done much bigger things, but for some reason people have gravitated toward, at least their first album. The third album isn't even out yet. I know they were pretty under the radar until one of the albums I did for them propelled them pretty far. Especially overseas. They do well in the UK.

**The Paper Chase seems to have a charm in the UK as well. They were picked up by Southern Records Europe and their music is embraced wholly by the European community.**

We were on a small label here in America called Beatville. We put out two records with that label, the last being, "Hide the Kitchen Knives". Right when we were just about to record that album, Southern Records Europe became interested in signing the band. So we worked out a deal where they re-released our first album over there as well as our second album. Southern Europe was the first substantial indie label to do anything with us. Now we are on a label called Kill Rock Stars.

**Did that catch you to the left to be picked up by a label in Europe? How did they find you guys?**

I honestly don't know exactly how it happened. I do know that John Loader himself, the guy who owns Southern Records was actually behind our signing. Which is bizarre cause the guy is like in his 70's. Well, I don't know how old he is actually. But the guy has been around for years. So the guy has got to be in his late 50's at least. So I'm gonna say he's in his 60's.

**The guy knows a hit when he hears it apparently.**

(laughs). Maybe you shouldn't say anything about his age.

**We'll just say he's more mature than your average music mogul.**

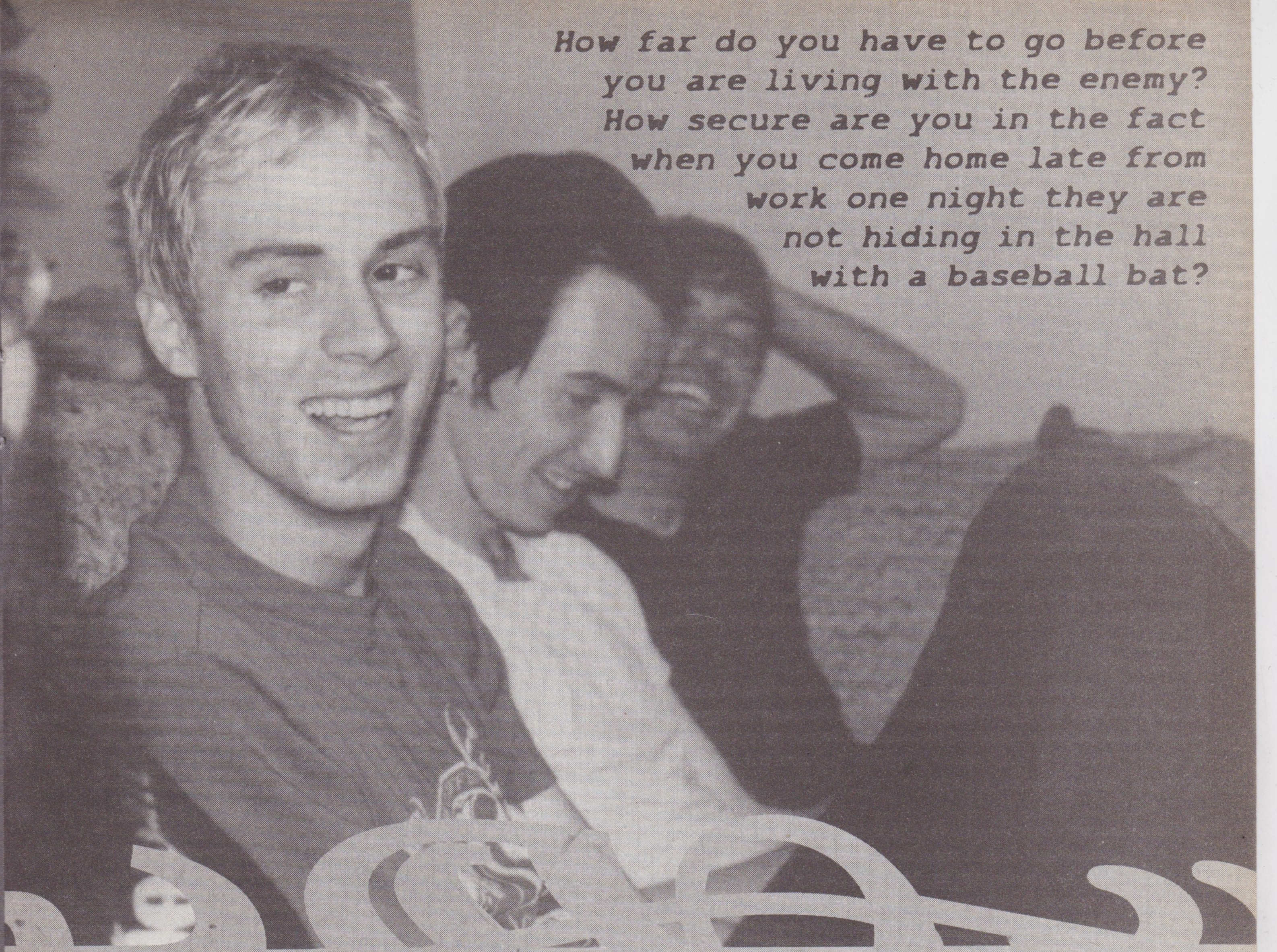
He's been there for it all, as far as punk rock goes. He really isn't that involved in who the label signs. But they put it out and we toured over there and it was wonderful. And we still have one more album that we are putting out with them. They just put out our EP "What Big Teeth You Have". Originally it wasn't going to be released in America, but they asked us if it was ok for Southern Records America released it and I was totally fine with that.

**I read somewhere where Paul Westerberg said, "Pro Tools is rubbish". Being a producer, and having an obvious appreciation for "sound", there is a recognizable degree of minimalism to the Paper Chase. One might think that being a producer, it would be... over-produced.**

I scrutinize the sound to the effect of I kind of go through the whole catalog in my head of what would be perfect. What is going to get across the emotion I want there. So there is a lot of careful thought put into what doesn't go there. I do sometimes feel like I want to indulge that sort of aspect of me, but I usually fight back that temptation. Because I feel like in the long run, one year later when I put the album on, I will be happier that I just let the song be the song. All that matters to me is getting across a certain feeling. For example, when people listen to "Hide The Kitchen Knives", I wanted people to feel like the needed to take a shower after listening to it. I wanted them to feel dirty. With that in mind, what kind of sound is going to make the listener feel that way? I think the most beautiful music out there is the music that never gets totally beautiful. I think toying around with an almost beautiful melody, but doing something to it that makes it sort of askew is really fun and challenging.

**It seems like most people who undertake that mentality, tend to destroy their music by going for such erratic anti-melody. The Paper Chase does a better job of capturing a song in there. A twisted and askew song, but clearly a song. This left of center writing has given rise to a certain degree of speculation about where Congleton's inspirations come from. It's rumored that the bands first album was written primarily as an outlet for Congleton's frequent panic attacks. Or perhaps that is press kit rhetoric.**

That is press rhetoric to a certain degree. What happens is, and I found this out over the last few years being in a band and doing lots of interviews, that you need to be careful what you say. Because everybody is looking for a spin. Which is ok, because you want to grab the reader. What happened was, I did this interview... I can even trace it back to the interview when it all started and I started reading this a lot. I did this one interview with an Omaha newspaper. We opened up for this band called Cursive in Omaha and they hooked us up with this local newspaper for an interview. And someone asks me a question that was someone pointed, like, "I get the feeling you suffer from metal anguish to some degree, like anxiety." And the fact of the matter is yes, I'm a nervous wreck. I've taken drugs for it. A lot of people call it "Panic Disorder". For entire adult life, since I was 16, I've had this pretty debilitating problem. So the first album I wrote it about this problem I had. I never really wanted people to know that. I kind of wanted people to take out whatever it meant to them or take it for



> How far do you have to go before you are living with the enemy? How secure are you in the fact when you come home late from work one night they are not hiding in the hall with a baseball bat?

nothing. You don't have to make any assumptions. There's not really a message I'm trying to get across. So this guy took a spin on it big time and basically monopolized probably 5 minutes of the interview and turned the entire article into this crazy guy from Dallas, Texas. And I'm still kind of angry about it because it was such a minute part of the interview, and I'm sure I said much more intelligent and enlightening things and he just spun it into this web of like I am insane. Unfortunately it's one of those interviews that really got out there, so a lot of other people would try to find information on the band and then write about that. So it's a truth, but it's a half-truth. I don't consider it some portrayal of a diseased mind. But it was something I was going through and that was the only outlet I had so I wrote a lot of music about it. So now I think it's blown out of proportion, so I take the opportunity every time I'm asked to put the record straight.

**As far as The Paper Chase fans taking his words too literally, I think that's a reflection on the audience that listens to a band like The Paper Chase. As arrogant as it sounds, they are musically a little more mature. Generally, they are people who are way past the radio and want something a little more musically challenging. Those are the people who are going to study a lyric sheet. Where the radio crowd doesn't care what it says as long as it rhymes with a good hook.**

**The Paper Chase get a lot of Pink Floyd comparisons. And deservedly so. I inquired into what other bands The Paper Chase get compared to, and which ones John agreed with.**

I definitely agree with Pink Floyd, or should I say Roger Waters. It's more of a Roger Waters thing. I don't consider myself to be influenced by Gilmore. But definitely Roger Waters. He was the first songwriter who showed me you could stand there naked and come up with something beautiful. The first time I heard "The Wall", it was just like, "wow man." I'd never heard such a display of brutally sardonic emotion. I thought it was amazing. I'm really into that. Songwriters who just write from their gut. Like Bob Dylan. Stuff like that. Just tear their hearts out and throw it on the plate. That's what I look for in anything that I like. We hear the Pink Floyd, and we hear the David Bowie from time to time. But sometimes people will compare us to more recent bands, and the fact of the matter is, not that I disrespect any of those bands, but I just don't listen to any them. For example, overseas we are always getting referred to Bright Eyes. Which just blew my mind. I just can't see it. Believe me, it didn't hurt us because would people came out thinking they were going to hear something like Bright Eyes. I've found people that like Bright Eyes seem to like us. At least there is a certain cross section. I've heard a lot of his stuff and I have 100% respect for him. Very talented guy. But I don't see the comparison. I'm not offended by the fact that I don't see it. I kinda wish they would mention the people that we are really ripping off. Like Roger Waters.

**On the "What Big Teeth You Have" 3 song EP, all the songs are pretty long, most push 5 min and the songs are darker than normally dark. Is this a sign of what's to come on the new album?**

It's right in the middle between, "Hide the Kitchen Knives" and what the new album sounds like. The new album has a lot more quieter, slower somber moments. But there are still other songs that aren't happier, but sort of peppier in a way. There are a few more moments on the new album where the songs move a little quicker. Believe me, nobody is going to think we "lightened up" or anything. I don't think that's going to be a problem.

**From the "Hide the Kitchen Knives" album, the song "I'm gonna spend the rest of my life lying" demonstrates the ugly stomping tempo The Paper Chase exemplify. Where did that song come from? Do you find yourself having to lie a lot?**

The whole album "Hide The Kitchen Knives" is about knowing people and how hard it is to know somebody. The whole kitchen knives thing is metaphorical to me. A knife, something that is very simple and plain and that is in every house. But that simple thing used in a different way can be so dastardly. It can be an evil thing. It's the little things that matter. The things we do to wear each other down. And sort of, again the Roger Waters type thing, but build walls between each other. Even if you've been married to somebody say for 25 years. How well do you really know them? You only know them as well as they let you know them. That song is sort of about a familial relationship and the way I think about it and can easily be interpreted as the male/female thing. Like, how far do you have to go before you are living with the enemy? How secure are you in the fact when you come home late from work one night they are not hiding in the hall with a baseball bat? So the song, "I'm going to spend the rest of my life lying" is sort of like, I'm going to spend the rest of my life, pretending to be somebody that I'm not. That's what I meant by that... possibly. Ask me tomorrow and we'll see what I think. Ask me two years ago... I don't know what I meant.

**You lyrics are obviously very personal. Are the lyrics very biographical?**

I write extremely metaphorically, always. It's biographical in the fact that I have had encounters in my life that didn't turned out very well. It's way to general to say it's the male/female relationship or a romantic relationship because it actually has a lot to do with familiar things to me. Fucked up family lives that I think that everybody goes through. I think that defies all borders. Everybody knows the politics of being in a family.

**Isn't that kind of a sad state of affairs that everybody can relate to a fucked up family?**

Well it seems to be omnipresent. It would be a lot more unhealthy to act like it doesn't happen. That's what the 1950's where all about. Its just art. It doesn't have to bring anybody down. It doesn't bring me down to think about these things. It's just a reality. To me, it's just so much more healthy to sing about it or sing songs instead of getting locked up about it.

**The track "A Little Place Called Trust" (from "Hide The...") intro is a brilliant composition of the sound of scraping, sharpening knives that are somehow pushed into the tracks backing rhythm.**

I'm still really proud of that actually. I had written the song and whenever I taught the song to the band, we just sort of started with the drums and the vocals and the piano playing that little part. Somehow or another, it just struck me that it sounded like knives. I know it doesn't, but somehow in my weird mind, it sounded good in my head. So one night I recorded all this stock footage, of like me chopping celery and stuff. It took hours just sort of recording this stuff. And then I just built this loop. When I recorded the band, I just had the band play to this loop just so they would be like extra influenced.

**When your lyrics focus on the very "here and now" of your world, do you find problems with the words of your past as you move on in life and your opinions and views shift?**

Every songwriter must go through that a little a bit. That first one, "Young Bodies Heal Quickly" especially. It was the first full length I had ever done. There were so many things I wanted to say. I think I got overzealous a lot on that album. I'm not un-proud of that album or anything like that. But it was one of those things where I had to get a lot of things out of my system. Then with a clear head I was able to do another full-length album, which was "Hide the Kitchen Knives". Which I think was a lot more concise. It seems very calculated. While "Young Bodies Heal Quickly" is the audio equivalent of somebody throwing spaghetti at the wall.

**Ever say anything you wish you could take back?**

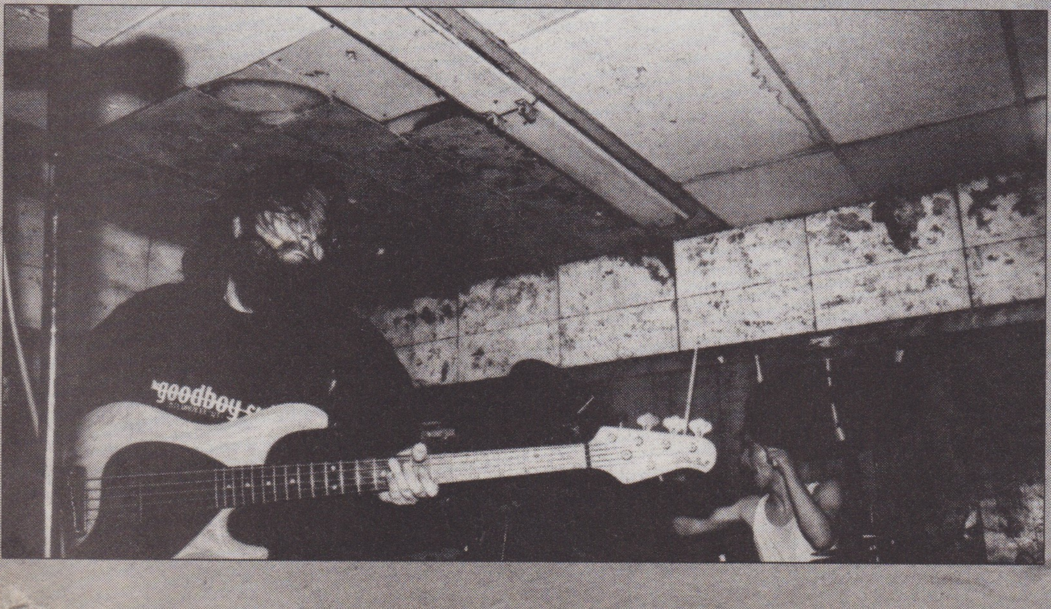
Not really. Everything I say is pretty encrypted. It's kinda hard to say a song is about one thing for me. Every song is about everything. So I've never done anything that I wish I could take back. But I'll tell you one thing that I felt really bad about. And this has nothing to do with the actual experience with me. But a really good friend of mine, Chris, he's one of my best friends, and he came back from his father's funeral. And was living with me at the time and he had just come back. I had just gotten copies of, "Hide the Kitchen Knives". We were just kind of flipping through it, and he's like, "Yeah it sounds great." Or whatever. And I was like, "Here, check out this last song." And the first line of the last song is, "Did your sweet Daddy die?" and I felt just insidious. Of course I wasn't singing about his dad. I wasn't singing about anything closely related to him. But that was the only time I felt like I was exploiting some evil nature. I knew what he was going through in his life and I felt extremely insensitive all of a sudden. That's the only time I've ever felt... bad... about something that I wrote.

**Some of your lyrics obviously deal with love gone wrong. Could your life make a good episode of Cheaters?**

(laughs). Wow. You know what's really amazing about that? Is that's it's filmed here in Dallas. I got asked to work on that show once doing audio. The band I was producing from Austin, their cousin came up and hung out on a couple of sessions. The first time I saw him I thought he looked familiar. The second time I saw him I told him he looked familiar and he was like, "Well, sometimes I'm on that TV show Cheaters." He was one of the security guys on Cheaters. I love that show. I think it's so over the top. I've the "Too Hot for TV DVD" for Cheaters. I'm totally into that show.

**I liked it when Tommi Grand was host. Joey Greco is little worm. That said, what makes you laugh? Who is your favorite comedian?**

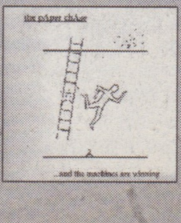
Bill Hicks. He's from Texas. He died in 1993. Fucking brilliant. Completely ahead of his time. If you like The Paper Chase, he is the comedic equivalent to The Paper Chase. He's got a lot of CDs out there. His popularity was sort of poll vaulted several years ago when that band Tool used some of his clips in their second album. To be honest, I've never even heard the album. But I've been told that. Inside the album they actually had a picture of Bill Hicks and it said something like, "We worship this guy" or something. So all these Tool fans went out and tried to figure out who this guy was. A close second would be probably be like George Carlin. Then Richard Pryor.



soundtrack performed by the pāper chāse

THE PAPER CHASE

the pāper chāse



**Where did you grow up? Happy childhood?**
Texas. I think I had a happy childhood. Most Americans don't have a lot to complain about. I had the typical bullshit with my family and whatnot just like anybody else. I think everybody goes through a certain amount of pain growing up. Growing up is hard.

**What was your favorite toy as a kid?**
This is going to sound like I'm bullshitting, but I was really really really into tape-recorders. I had like three tape-recorders and I just got a huge kick out of recording things. Even as a small child. I used to make songs with my mouth. Like, writing music as a tiny kid. I was really into Legos. I remember liking Legos a lot. I was into Halloween stuff, all year around. Masks and Halloween type stuff is my favorite. The first album I ever bought with my own money was like a "Spooky Sounds of a Haunted House".

**Where did you fall on the social scale in high school?**
I was a little bit of a misfit the first few years. The first few years of high school I wanted to be liked so badly. I wanted to be kind of popular and I think that I was trying to hard or something. I was a dork. I think that's what a lot of kids end up doing. That was more of my first year. The last couple of years I just kind of turned into not giving a fuck in general. I think that actually helped me. I was already playing in bands and was like, "Well, fuck it, none of this stuff matters anyway." So by the time I was a senior in high school, I would say I probably go through high school Ok. I got through it alive. It didn't scar me or anything. All I cared about was making music so I did what I had to do to get through high school, just to pass, and not make any serious waves. I knew it was stupid. I knew it didn't matter. I knew no matter how much they kicked and screamed they were just going to fuck up my life and make it harder to do what I really wanted to do. So I sort of grinned and beared it. I don't look back on high school as being a painful experience. I look back at it as a major annoyance. Something I wish that I could not have done had I been able.

**What's the most ridiculous place you've ever played a show?**
We've played a couple of churches, which is always weird. We played a couple of Nazi bunkers in Germany.

**You have the ability to reach a lot of people with your music. That's definitely a great power. What defines "power" to you?**
Wow, good question man. To me, I think power is kind of an evil thing, because it corrupts. I would like to believe that it's not evil, but I can't help but always feel that anybody in power is evil. That's just sort of my cynical nature. I think power has to do with being able to manipulate people, manipulate things.

**And you have that power.**
I like to think I don't.

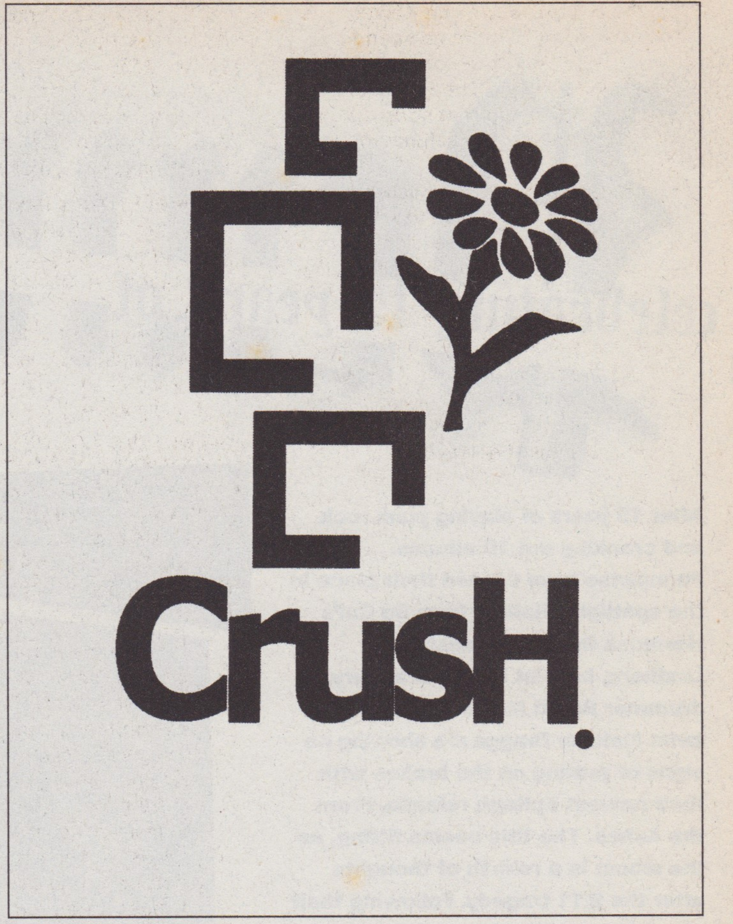
**But you do.**
I think I don't. At least not yet.

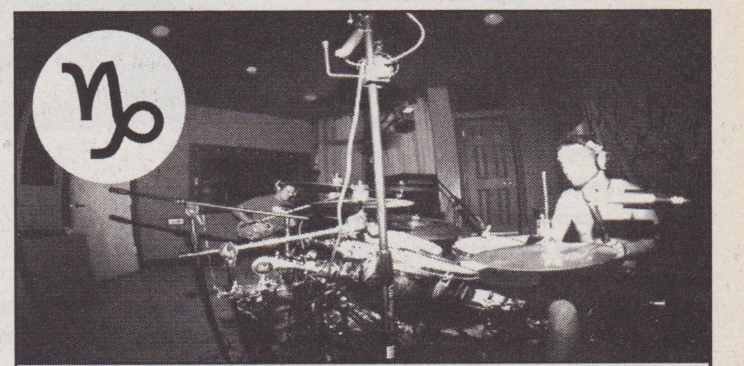
**Think of it in the scale of anytime you play a show, there is a whole evening, of a whole bunch of people that would have been doing something else, but they are not. They are spending that time with you.**
I've thought about that and what kind of awesome responsibility that is. When you think about it, life is really short. The average person lives to be 75 years old or whatever. And there are only 365 days a year. And after you turn 18, it all flies by anyways. To have somebody's attention for one hour of one evening, and even potentially a lot more if they become a fan. That's pretty awesome.

**So it's not manipulating power, but effecting type power.**
Even if they hate your band. I gotta be honest with you, I totally remember the bands I totally hate way better than the bands that didn't do anything for me one way or the other. I remember the bands I love, and the bands I really hate.

**Tell me a secret about The Paper Chase.**
We take the music very seriously, but we don't take ourselves very seriously, at all. We just don't. I think that's a great thing and one of the reasons we have stayed together as long as we have. We are actually the biggest fucking morons in the world when it comes to doing anything to make each other laugh. We will pull out any body part and do anything to it that needs to be done to make somebody else in the band laugh.

www.thepaperchaseband.com





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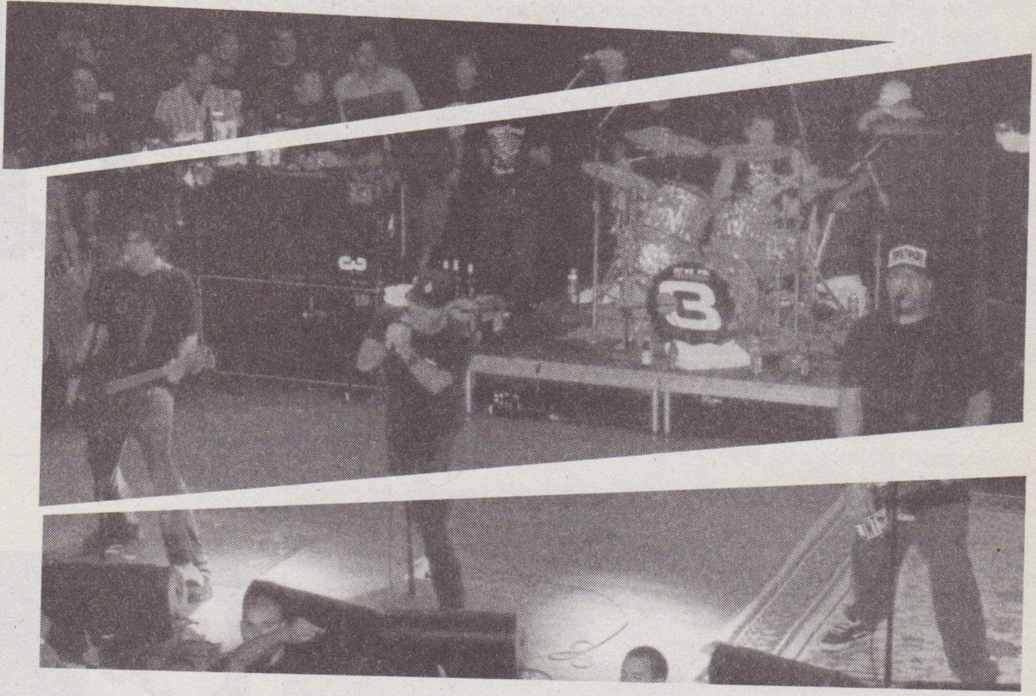
## celebrating 15 years of

# Pennywise

### interview by kelli skye

**After 15 years of playing punk rock and cranking out 10 albums, Pennywise have earned their place in the spotlight. Hailing from So Cal's Hermosa Beach, vocalist Jim Lindberg, bassist Randy Bradbury, drummer Byron McMackin, and guitarist Fletcher Dragge are showing no signs of putting on the brakes with their newest Epitaph release, From the Ashes. The title seems fitting, as the album is a rebirth of thoughts after the 9/11 tragedy. Following their album release the band hit the So Cal circuit small venue-style to play two weeks' worth of gigs for their fans.**



**Catching up with them on their second night at the House of Blues in Anaheim proved to be a challenge, as just moments before my interview time Fletcher called an emergency band meeting – doors were shut and locked and there was no getting in. Although they didn't comment on what the meeting was about, when I was finally allowed to enter the only remaining members of the band were Randy Bradbury and Fletcher Dragge, along with a few of their friends and the Pennywise Tech Guy. Bradbury sat kicked back in a folding chair, and Dragge lay sprawled out over the small leather couch. They seemed to be in good spirits as the guys joked that all questions should only be directed at Dragge.**

"Don't even bother directing questions in any other direction but that way," Bradbury joked pointing at Dragge. "I'm more inclined to answer in the third-person like, 'Oh Fletcher likes this,' or, 'Oh, Jim wrote about that.' That sort of thing." Dragge pulls over a chair for me and then grabs my knee with a serious look. He's sort of a frightening man – but then a smirk appears through his mountain man beard. "Do you want a serious interview or like a kidding around interview," he asks.

**These things always go better unplanned, so we just dive in. It seems that the average lifespan of a band is only a couple years. Bands break up because they can't handle each other, they get angry, or the pressure of success or failure drives them apart. So how does a band stay together for 15 years?**

"By the skin of our teeth," Dragge says laughing. "Wow, that's in interesting question. We've all just learned each other's personalities and we pretty much know what makes the other ones mad. We try to not do it – or do it as little as possible. We do, on some level, try to accommodate each other."
"With the exception of me," Bradbury adds. "Every once in a while it doesn't work that well and you get mad," Dragge continues. "We yell a little bit, no punching or anything – and usually by the next day we're over it. Just a little venting. You vent and accommodate."

**Dragge was quick to add that there are days when he just doesn't want to play anymore, but points out that at the end of the day the importance of the message in the music is what keeps Pennywise going.**
**The Pennywise fan base is massive. Their fans come in various ages, shapes, and colors but bond together over the furious lyrical content and quality punk rock music. Pennywise feels that the same factor that keeps them together as a band, and draws their fans to them.**

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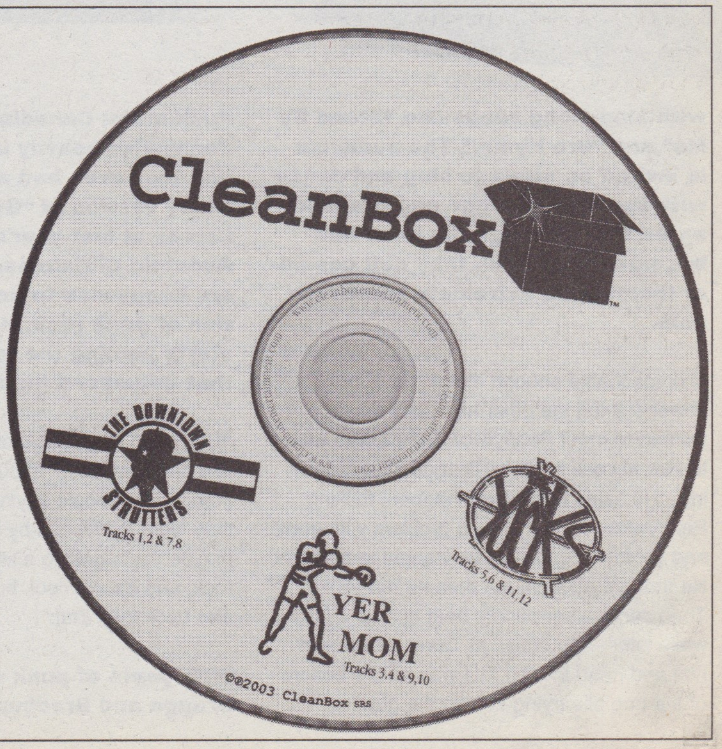
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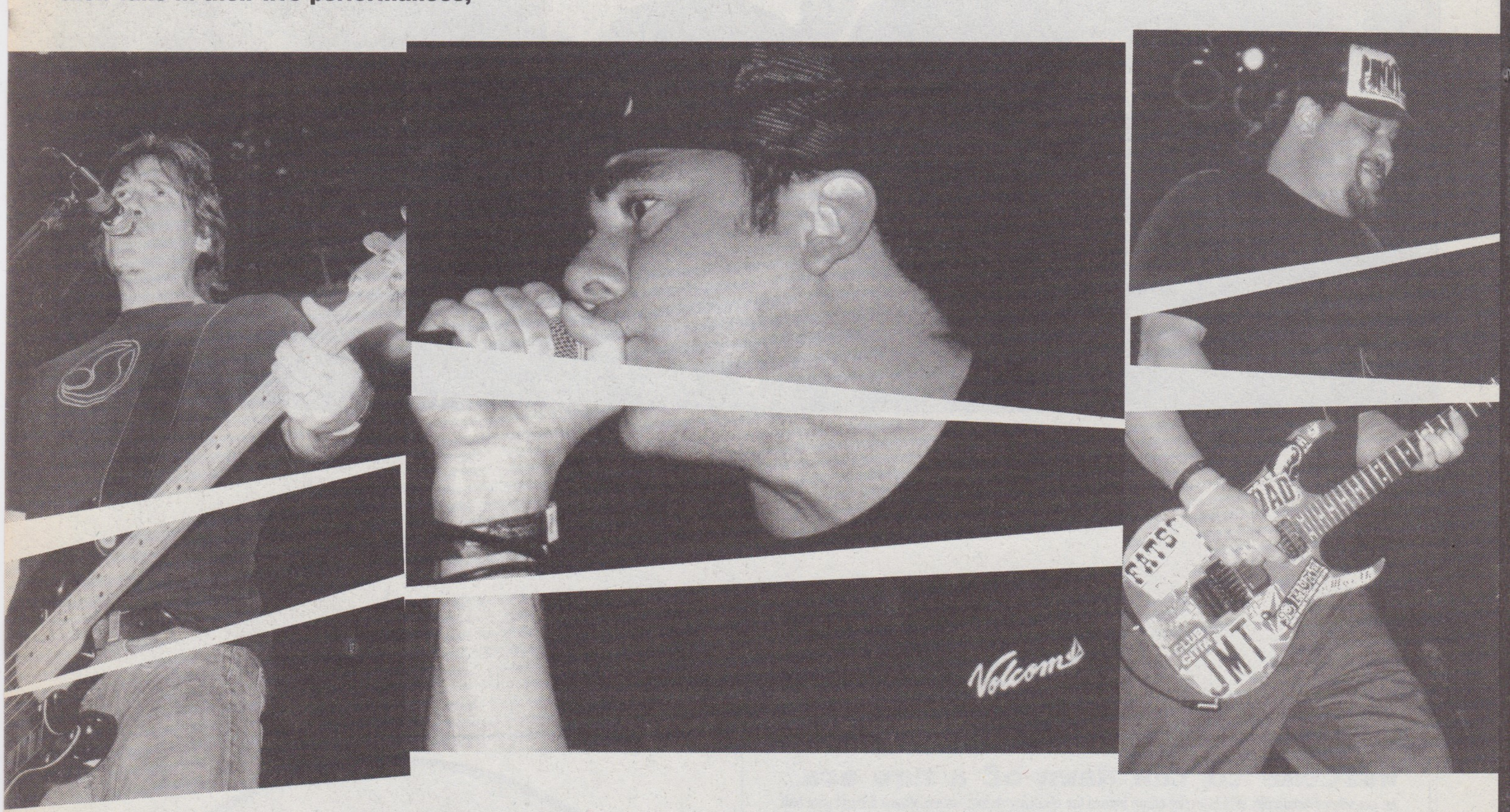
## Pennywise Interview Continued...

“It’s our message – that’s the key factor for Pennywise,” Dragge says. “Music is music, but lyrics are important and I think kids really relate to what we write songs about, and what Jim’s thinking. It comes back to everyone really relating to the message. Also I think it’s the fact that we try to treat our fans like equals and we have a lot of respect for them. We want them to feel like more of a part of the band than them just watching some rock stars up on stage because that’s not who we are.”



**Pennywise are known for including their fans in their live performances, with sing-along songs like “Stand By Me” and “Bro Hymn.” The audience is invited on stage to sing and dance with the band. Dragge and Bradbury agree that although the band has become successful, they still consider themselves extremely approachable.**

“Approachable enough that a guy at our Tower signing the other night told me he wanted to meet Pennywise and he was willing to kick my ass to do it,” Dragge says laughing. “He said, ‘Bitch, I wanna meet fucking Pennywise, do you have a problem with that?’ and I said no, and then he wanted to fight me. He thought about it, but then he ran away. Then some other people beat him up a little while later – the crowd at Tower rat-packed him and I had to stop it. I was on the bottom of the dog pile trying to help the guy.”

**Pennywise serve as a major influence for numerous newer punk rock acts. Just as Pennywise looked up to bands like Black Flag, the new wave of punkers look to Pennywise.**

“I think that bands naming us as an influence make us feel really old,” Dragge said. “I never even think about that. It’s weird to think that we’re an influence to people, when we were so heavily influenced by Black Flag, Dead Kennedys, and Circle Jerks. I just think everyone should be influenced by those bands because those are the best punk bands in the world.”

**Punk-metal Canadians Sum 41, claim Pennywise heavily influences their music, and they even had a chance to play a heavy version of “Bro Hymn” with their heroes at last year’s Annual KROQ Almost Acoustic Christmas. Dragge still considers Pennywise to be the second generation of punk rock. He trails off as he starts naming the “grandfather” bands that influenced his music.**

“Kids need to go back into the roots of punk rock to find out what it’s all about,” he continues. “There’s going to be people saying 10 years from now that they were influenced by Good Charlotte – and maybe that’s getting a little far from the truth of punk rock, and it’s still cool, but kids will need to go further back than that.”

**With years of punk rock to look back at, Dragge and Bradbury agree that fans of theirs, who are willing to name Pennywise as an influence, need to pick up two essential punk albums.**

“They need to get Minor Threat’s ‘Minor Threat’,” Dragge says without hesitation. “It’s the best album ever. But you can’t really narrow me down to just one. If you told me I had to survive with only one album, I wouldn’t be able to pick just one.” “Definitely the Adolescents’ self-titled, or the ‘Blue Album’, as it’s referred to,” Bradbury adds. “It’s So Cal punk at its finest.”

**After years of venting and accommodating each other, Pennywise press on unafraid and unapologetic about what they present. They feel they’ve accomplished a great amount, but how have they grown as a band?**

“Well about 10 inches around the waist,” Dragge laughs. “I don’t know if I’m just hallucinating but it seems like my penis is getting smaller. Maybe it’s just my body getting bigger. For some reason I can’t gain weight in that area. But it was a decent size to begin with so it’s not that big of a tragedy.”

**Dragge takes off his trucker hat and places it over his crotch to keep Bradbury and myself from checking him out.**

"I don't think we've grown much really," Dragge continues. "We try to keep the same formula. We have a way to do things and it works in our favor. We don't want to be the band that changes our sound so drastically that people listen to it and hate it. We want the kids to say, 'Hey, it sounds like the same old shit.' If we turn our backs musically on our existing fans, then they'll turn their backs on us as fans, and we don't want that. We like to be the same, but add a little salt and pepper in every once in a while."

"When I grew up I wanted to play the fastest, most melodic, punk rock you could possibly imagine and if we keep perfecting it we'll be better," Bradbury adds. "To change it wouldn't be fun. Even if there are a hundred people who review the record and say it's the same old thing, we won't care because we like it. We're going to keep playing it and hopefully get better at it."

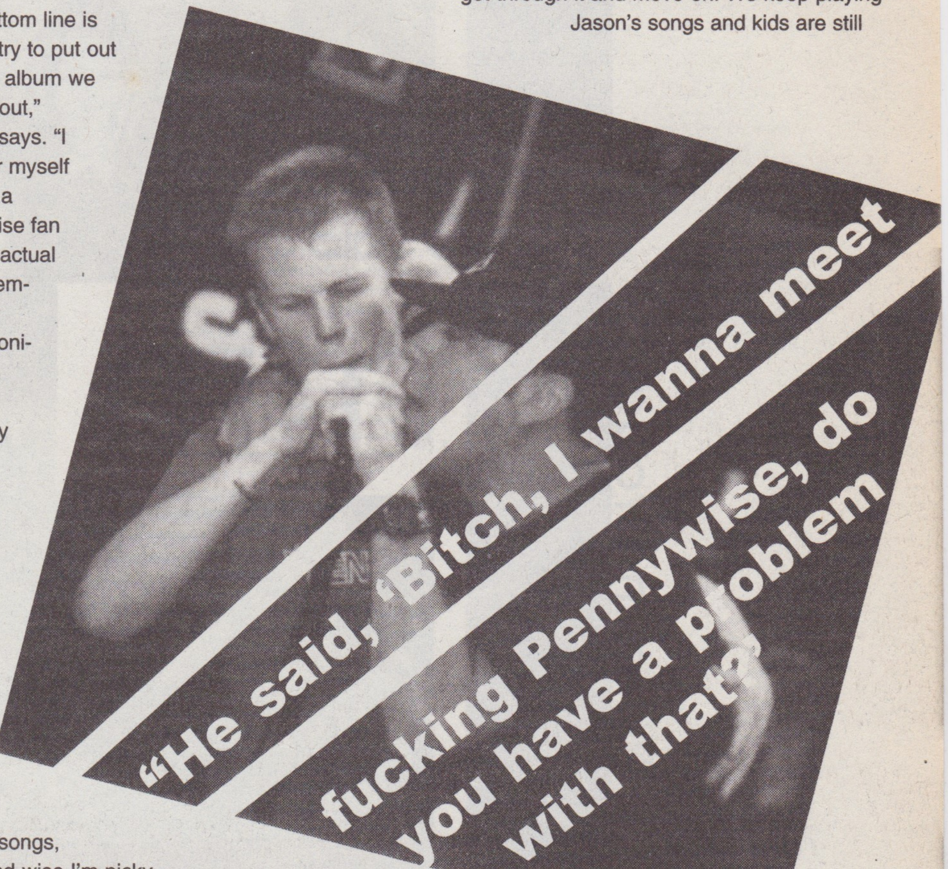
**The new Pennywise album, 'From the Ashes', represents the "same old" Pennywise sound, with powerful messages of hope, loss, sadness, government issues, and so much more.**

"From the Ashes symbolizes a type of starting over, and learning lessons from major events like 9/11," Dragge explains. "Every album we have done is a sign of the times. The older we got, the more political we became because politics started to affect our lives more, and it wasn't just about a big party every night. The last album was a real attack on government and authority in general, and this album has a melancholy vibe to it because we've been talking about this shit 'til we were blue in the face, and the only people listening are our fans. It's not like the Senate is listening to Pennywise."

**Even if the government isn't listening, the fans are soaking up Pennywisdom as the band's website is continuously flooded with the independent thoughts of their fan base. The lyrical content on the new album gives listeners a lot to think about.**

"I want them to listen and walk away pissed off at American policies," Dragge says. "If they don't walk away pissed off and start protesting and educating themselves, then there are going to be people that are going to die because some maniac that hates America is going to figure out a way to wipe out five million Americans. Until the American public takes responsibility for what its government is doing overseas, we're going to be looking at a world of hurt. Hopefully our little bit of babble changes something somewhere along the line. Hopefully a Pennywise fan ends up in office one day and makes a change in the way things are run. That goes for all governments around the world that are fucked up, we don't just single out America, but we focus on it because we live here."

**Dragge admits he's read bad reviews on the new album, but remains unaffected.**



"He said, 'Bitch, I wanna meet fucking Pennywise, do you have a problem with that?'"

"The bottom line is that we try to put out the best album we can put out," Dragge says. "I consider myself more of a Pennywise fan than an actual band member.This album sonically, turned out really well. Songwise. I'm always into the songs, but sound-wise I'm picky. Darian Rundall did a fantastic job making this album sound great."

Although 9/11 fueled the fire for the lyrics on From the Ashes, there is another factor that continues to weighs heavy on the hearts of Pennywise.

"I think Jason, our old bass player's death, was a pretty profound moment," Dragge offers reluctantly. "It made all the stuff we wrote about, and the stuff Jason wrote about all that more meaningful. Like life is short and live your life to the fullest while you're here. All that stuff we had been writing for years really got shoved into your face and 'BOOM', this is reality, and he's gone. The words he wrote become twice as meaningful when he was gone. It was a defining moment on how to live and how to take advantage of life because you could be gone tomorrow."

**Though he finds it difficult, Dragge continues to discuss former bassist Jason Trisk, Trisk's battle with addiction, and struggles to fill the void within the group.**

"It was difficult to replace Jason," Dragge goes on. "Randy was the obvious choice. He had already been playing with us, and him and Jason had been friends. We did think that maybe we shouldn't have gone on because Jason was such a huge part of the band, but would Jason have wanted us to do that? It was everything we stood for - conquering hardships in our lives, moving forward and not giving up. That was a big part of Jason's lyrics, and by us calling it quits, it would have been us totally fucking over everything he ever said. So we decided to get through it and move on. We keep playing Jason's songs and kids are still singing his lyrics, and it makes it even more heartfelt."

**With 15 years of the good, the bad, and the ugly behind them, and a new album to tour on, can fans expect a 20-year Pennywise anniversary?**

"I'm into it," Dragge says. "Basically as long as we're having fun doing it and not up there faking it, kids are coming to shows, and buying our records then we'll be there. Will we be around forever? I doubt it, but only because we're going to have arthritis so bad from playing our instruments so fast. We never try to predict the future; we've always just gone with the flow. Right now the future looks good, we have a new album out and we're happy with it, and we'll take it from there. Hopefully we're here for a while."

design/layout by Michael Janiak

# an interview with ville valo of him

by: erin broadley

**HIM frontman Ville Valo has spent the past seven years trying to describe his music to critics eager to delineate the Finnish rock band in a way that eases their word count.**

HIM has been best described by the press as "Depeche Mode meets Dimmu Borgir in a David Lynch movie," though by now the band has coined the phrase "love metal" to summarize its sound which Valo explains as, "music that includes elements of pop, metal, goth, glam...it's music inspired by the feelings you have before the first touch, before the first kiss." Love metal is music that embraces emotion but also pours you a drink. It's a love letter signed in blood but sealed with Jack Daniel's, not with a kiss. It makes your heart ache but it also raises your eyebrow and makes your lip curl. It's foreplay that skips the sex and goes straight for the post-coital cigarette. It's watching your lover sleep only to realize that you can't get Black Sabbath's "Crazy Train" out from stuck in your mind.

From their humble beginnings in Helsinki, Finland in 1995 to playing sold out gigs across Europe four critically acclaimed albums later, HIM has brought European rock romanticism a higher level of musicianship and an irresistibly charming attitude to match. Completed by Mige on bass, Linde on guitar, Gas on drums and Burton on keyboards, the band first garnered widespread attention for its impressive cover of Chris Issak's "Wicked Game," but have since built an expansive musical catalog that swaggers its way right on past the road sign that points to one-hit-wonders. HIM has rightly earned its legions of admirers, some of which include Ozzy Osbourne (who has invited the band on tour), pro-skater and Jackass star Bam Margera (who directed two of HIM's music videos to date), and actress Juliette Lewis (who starred in one of those videos).

European shores secure, HIM decided to bring its music stateside and re-released Razorblade Romance on Universal Records on October 28, finally making the album available in America whereas before it could only be bought as an import. Excited about HIM's American debut, Ville Valo took a few hours out of his vacation time in Finland to talk about songwriting, art, and why he doesn't think he'll ever need a prescription for Prozac.

**Erin Broadley: Let's talk about your role as a songwriter and, with that, the ability to marry dream with reality - to marry melody with emotional significance. How do you see yourself within this framework?**

Ville Valo: I'm kind of schizophrenic when it comes to music. I like all sorts, all shapes and all kinds. It's like Gene Simmons with ladies, me with music. My parents used to listen to old melancholic Finnish folk music so that's maybe where the sadness comes into my music. I also grew up with Neil Diamond, Neil Young, Johnny Cash and Cat Stevens - all those folky songwriters - and in my teen years I listened to heavy metal. With HIM I didn't want to get rid of any of those influences but hopefully create a unique cocktail with all those elements in there. It's really hard for me to separate the fantasy from the reality in the music because I live my life in the music that I write. I'm like a very sociable hermit.

**Do you feel that, as a songwriter, there is a certain responsibility with words to bridge the gap between the abstract communication of music and more literal verbal communication?**

I think it's a bit different because I didn't grow up in an English speaking family. I learned my English from television. Language is always very visual for me and very musical as well.

C

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I like to chew on words, like tobacco. I like to taste the words and I like how they look. I can't do the same in Finnish. When I was a bit younger I tried to write in Finnish as well but when a language is so deep inside of you its hard to get rid of all the cliches. It's easier to play around with the words when you're not speaking them everyday. But the responsibility with words is definitely towards myself. It also depends on the [listener]. Some people claim that we're Satanic and lead the youth into despair. Others claim it to be very cathartic that they can live through their bullshit through our music. That's how music was for me. When I felt sad in the mornings I'd listen to Black Sabbath and all the aggression and melancholic aspects in the music helped me to get through it - to take those few steps into the kitchen and make myself a cup of coffee and go to school. Music for me is like cleaning up your psyche. There's always going to be conversations about the responsibility of music or art in general but you never know what's going to effect somebody. In Europe once, we had a big drama going on because some dude killed himself and when he was found he had our song "Join Me in Death" in his Walkman. Then again, I've had maybe a hundred letters from people saying that particular song really helped them out. Nowadays, if Romeo and Juliet were published it'd probably be banned. I'm not claiming that I'm William Shakespeare number two but still I think that there has to be the right to sing about whatever you want.

**Absolutely. I think that sometimes people can be quick to label melancholy as negative. But like you said in regards to those letters you got, sometimes there can be something beautiful that comes out of those feelings. It's denial to imply that the dark side of human emotion doesn't exist.**

Exactly. I was such a desperate, depressed prick when I started doing music when I was 12 or 13 years old and first fell in love with a girl and she fell in love with my best friend. [That's when] I wrote my first song. Since then I've found that it's a lot cheaper to write songs that to go to psychotherapy. I'm not into the drug-fueled medical system that's going on in the world, where you go to a doctor and they always give you a pill. That's just bullshit because nobody knows how the brain really functions. I don't think that the human psyche works that way. I do loads of drugs because I'm an asthmatic. I have to do loads of cortisone just to be able to breathe. But if I'm depressed I'd rather talk to my friends and try to get rid of it by whatever means necessary but not [with drugs]. Maybe I've never been in such a bad state of mind that I'd need to go through all that. But maybe it will happen one day and then I'd say totally the opposite.

**Continuing with songwriting, let's talk about lyrical literalism versus posing questions and allowing the listener to arrive at his or her own conclusions. Do you think there is a danger in explaining too much?**

It's the same difference like between porn and eroticism. It's a lot more interesting for the mind to be able to create its own stories. It's great food for the imagination. It's the same with lyrics - you have to give a bit but not too much, otherwise it kills all the magic. For me, with Black Sabbath or Jane's Addiction, when I've heard some of the stories behind the songs it sort of took away the magic. I don't know how it is with our stuff because our stuff is pretty personal. I'm such an egoistic bastard, you know, that I'm always writing about myself and my relationship towards the world (laughs).

**It sounds like you would agree then that there can be a danger in explaining too much and that sometimes a great song is one that poses questions and leaves room for growth with the listener.**

Exactly. It's lovely to have conversations or fights about lyrics with your friends. It's weird because nowadays it seems people aren't into music to really try to discover the essence of lyrics or really feel them. There's so much bullshit around - so many people just whining about driving under palm trees with their fancy Hummers and whining about how hard it is to live. That's not real because it doesn't touch anybody's hearts. Only one percent of the world has fast cars and maybe two percent have silicone boobies. But everybody's got a heart. Everybody's got imagination. Everybody's got good days and bad days. That's what I'm writing about personally. That's the only thing I know something about. [As far as] the writing process, I think it's best when it just happens, almost subliminally. When you're sort of surprised yourself that your hand has been writing things down on a piece of paper and you're like, "What the fuck's going on?" I don't want to think of writing music as a mathematical process. For me, I pick up a guitar and have a good time playing it and writing a song. Hopefully it turns out to be a beautiful song that I'll really like. And hopefully, after that, there are people who will like it and hopefully the process of getting that particular song on tape works in a way that everybody's happy. That's the whole thing. Then comes in the business side of it, marketing and that bullshit. It's so complicated that I really don't want to think about it. I don't want to become a businessman. I consider myself maybe to be a musician but maybe like a sonic plumber. I plumb out all the bullshit from myself through the music. It's like mantras or ohms. My songs are my mantras. That's the only way I can forget about my existence and just be.

**What is the songwriting process like for you?**

It's always a bit different. I usually come up with the music first, the melodies. I tend to have mood swings in a way that I can start a song as a ballad, have totally different lyrics and then all of a sudden within two weeks decide that it has to be an Iggy Pop and the Stooges rip off. Its always different because everyday you feel different. I've been writing music about 13-14 years now and I still don't know what it's all about. And I don't want to know. It's a weird thing and, like we were just talking about, it's magical in a way. I don't want to ruin it by being too analytical. The best way for me to express my emotions is through music, not through lyrics, because a single word can mean millions of different things to different people. Saying, "I love you" is such a different thing for so many people. For some people it's a cool thing, for some it's coy, for some it's fantasy, for some it's a grim reality. That's the reason why I don't like lyrics as much. I tend to think that the lyrics, in a way, just color up the music and tell its story. [The lyrics] just give a clue about the emotion that the music expresses.

**Are you more concerned with the lyrical narrative or the sound of the words you're singing?**

Both. I work hard at the lyrics and hopefully they're good enough for some people. I really do take pride in both. I'm not making compromises. I've got a rhythm and a melody and that kind of helps me to pick out the right words. But I want to create stories as well. I really like strong language, verbally, so that's one of the reasons I use religious terminology. I love the word "redemption." I love that, as Russian writers once used to do, if I write about going to a grocery store and seeing a pretty lady, I make that tiny 15 seconds a heartbreaking moment. I like to exaggerate a lot. I must be a romantic or whatever but that's what I like to do lyrically.

**After listening to Razorblade Romance, I came away feeling it was a sweet yet sad love letter directed towards what I see these days as people's tendency to replace honesty of the heart with**

**cynicism. In working a lot with themes that convey a certain longing, do you ever find it difficult to break through that collective cynicism?**
Not really because I just do what I do. I consider our music to have loads of humorous sides to it as well, especially the lyrics. I take my work seriously but I don't take myself seriously. Whenever I wake up in the morning and look into the mirror, I usually laugh. It's the same with my lyrics. I don't want them to be too overwhelming, too big or too romantic. There has to be some humorous little wink of an eye so that even if your heart's completely breaking and you're feeling like a little slug that somebody wants to crush under his or her feet, that you can still just laugh about it. But I know what you mean about the cynicism going around in the world. It's terrible. I think that people are either too honest or too cynical. I think to be a functional human being you have to be something in-between. I'm a bit of a wanker, you know. I've been kicked in the balls way too many times but I'm not writing about that. It's about the cathartic element, the purification through music and through lyrics - that's how I see rock music at its best. There are loads of musicians who have brilliant lyrics but where's the music? Then there are loads of great bands that are musically ingenious but [have] no lyrical substance at all. Very few people can put them both together. And I'm not claiming that I'm doing that but I'm trying and hopefully one day, with a song or two, I will be able to have a perfect marriage of those two things. I listen to shitty music too though, silly pop music. Not all music has to be brilliant in every way. There are a few bands though, like Faith No More with Mike Patton who did Angel Dust, which is one of my favorite albums. It's the album I learned how to sing with. I would skip school and put that on full blast from the stereos at my parents' place and sing to it. When an album like that comes out and you buy it from a record store, put it on and you're blown away - that really gives me the energy to go on because I [also] consider myself a fan. I'm not reinventing the wheel. And loads of people think they are.

It's really hard for me to separate the fantasy from the reality in the music because I live my life in the music that I write.

**I understand that in addition to music you paint as well. How did that start for you?**
When I was younger I went to art school but then had to make a decision between graphic arts and music. I was pretty good but I just didn't have the time. I'm really happy that with music there are so many visual things going on when talking about the album sleeve artwork or creating videos. It's great that you can do so many things at the same time. That's what I like about music - that it's not just about me having an acoustic guitar on my lap. There's always a good reason to throw that acoustic guitar away for a few moments and think about something else.

**Music can bring together so many different artistic forms.**
Yeah, there are good examples like Marilyn Manson who's done it all. I don't particularly like any of his art but I'm glad that he's been able to paint and all that. It just doesn't personally touch my heart.

**He had a gallery opening in Los Angeles awhile back and I remember driving by and seeing people lined up for blocks to get in. I couldn't help but ask myself whether or not all those people would still be lined up if he weren't Marilyn Manson.**
Well it's sort of great and it's what I've always said about Miles Davis. He used to prove himself as a superior jazz musician doing all the classic jazz albums. Then when he was on top of the world with loads of money he was just able to shoot up heroin and create the shittiest free jazz albums in the world (laughs). That's beautiful. That's what we all crave - to be on top of our hills and just pee on everybody (laughs). It seems to be the same case with Marilyn to a certain extent that he had to prove himself commercially first and now people are interested in whatever he does. That's cool in a way because it's not easy. Poets and painters may claim that that's bullshit but who the fuck cares. Marilyn had that two-mile queue, had all the interest and sold most of his work. What's good and what's bad art? Art is also about a person's character and that they've created something you can have. You don't want to have it because of what it is; you want to have it because of who it's from, with some people. Salvador Dali for example, I don't like his work at all. It's technically good but what I am really into when talking about Dali, is his own life. He is a piece of art. He was such a controversial personality that if I had a print of one of his works on my wall - thank god I don't by the way - but if I did, when I'd look at it I'd remember that mustache, that crazy look and everything I've heard or read about him. That's how I see music and art. A song can be like a page in a diary. It's like a time machine. I can always go back to that moment and in a way, re-live that sentiment.

**Do you see certain parallels between music and painting?**
To be honest with you, I haven't thought about it too much because I usually hate painters. I love photography but I don't like other visual art so much. For me, music is a lot better [than painting] in that music is painting I do sonically. The frame is the cheap plastic CD and the whole essence of it is in a piece of plastic that you play and then there's 50 minutes of painting. I think art is there to fuck up your senses. A sculpture or a painting can be really musical and a song can be very visual. I don't separate those things because music for me is always visual. Books are really visual as well. I think that most books are more interesting than paintings.

**The interesting thing about books and music, as opposed to painting, is that they're so cerebral - they exist visually only in your head, as opposed to visually in front of your eyes.**
Exactly. I love that there are so many different views on all that. Like, what's the percentage of [people who appreciate] the visuality of music? And I'm not talking about cover art; I'm talking about the actual music. It's always interesting. With books, some people only read the words black on white and some people paint pictures in their heads. It doesn't really matter though because it's not a competition. And thank god it's not a competition because no one can really know how beautiful the pictures are in your head.

**The other day I read an interview with Brian Molko of Placebo where he talked about what he saw as the difference between art and entertainment, mainly being that entertainment is there to distract you. Do you see music as a form of escapism or more as something to communicate a particular realism?**
For me it's just getting out of yourself, looking at yourself and looking at what the world is really about - to try to not be so chained into the piece of flesh that the human being is. It's like escapism to come back. I don't know what our music does for people. As a songwriter, I haven't talked to so many people about it. I don't know whether it is escapism to just get away for a second. That's what I consider entertainment to be about - to forget about your existence for a second and to enjoy it. Good music for me is not forgetting who you are. It's not forgetting what sort of situation you're in. It's not necessarily even giving you any hope or understanding. It's just giving you a bit of relief. Maybe it's like turning back the hands of time for a second to think about the decisions you've made and the decisions you're going to make in the future. When I fall in love with a song, there's no time. That's what good music does. It's having your intellect working at the same time as your heart, on the same level, with both of them understanding each other. It can be really sensual. Rage Against the Machine was a great example of that. They were really conscious and had loads of things to say but still their musical vibe was so strong that both were on the same level. It's that balance.

**And when music doesn't have that balance?**
I don't really consider that to be the band's fault. I think that there are too many people who started doing music just to get somewhere else, to use music as a ladder to have wealth or credibility. And that's not a good reason to do music. You should do music because you love music and you want

to do just music for the sake of it. Record companies follow trends because they are there to create money. But we as musicians don't have to follow their rules. We can do whatever we want. Of course it'd be really nice if I someday bought my own apartment. But if not I'd rather be sleeping under a bridge doing what I do and having a good time while doing it. I don't believe that musicality has anything to do with commercial mathematics. You can't just calculate it because that's like selling your soul to the devil, and I'm not talking about the good, old-fashioned rock and roll devil. I'm talking about the real evil that lies in the industry and the whole situation nowadays, especially with popular music. It's complicated but I'm not blaming anybody. I feel that there seem to be very few defenders of the faith left doing it because they really love music and that's the only way they can express themselves. It's a cruel world nowadays but its cool that there are wankers around as well because that always makes you question what you are here for. One of my musical gods has always been Neil Young because he's never done what people expect from him. He's done shitty albums, he's done good albums. But he's still here, still popular and can still touch many people's hearts and do beautiful music whenever he feels like it. He's one that gives me strength.

**Lets talk about HIM and how the band dynamic functions both live and in the studio. Do you have a preference?**
You can't really compare because it's more of a drum circle, ritualistic thing when you play a gig. There's the natural drug, adrenaline, which goes through your body. I didn't like performing live for years. I didn't feel comfortable and was always kind of anxious to get off the stage. But nowadays it feels better. Originally I used to play different instruments - bass guitar, drums, guitar and a bit of keyboards. This is the first band I've sung in and that's the reason it took like 6 years and 400 gigs for me to get rid of the cigarette in one hand and the bottle of beer or red wine in the other. I was just so nervous I didn't know what to do with my hands. Performing live is still pretty difficult for me but I'm a good actor.

**Why so difficult?**
It's really weird to be put on a pedestal with thousands of people clapping their hands to the song you wrote like a year and a half ago sitting on your bed wearing your underwear because you felt so fucking bad. It's a thing my brain doesn't compute to a certain extent but I'm getting used to it. I hate being in the studio because it's so boring. It wears you out so easily when a good song just happens - you're sitting back at home creating the skeleton, then at the rehearsal place you're putting on the organs and in the studio your putting on the skin, all the final touches. Then you're like, "Wow, did this really come somewhere from my heart?" That's great. Creating is always wonderful but its like a never-ending story because when you take that song, put it in your live set and you play it like 400-500 times, it changes a lot. A song is an ever-growing process. It's never finished, which is a bad thing in a way. It's not like a painting that when you finish it, it's finished and then you just don't touch it. A song keeps on going which is pretty scary. I was laughing my ass off when we played this one festival in Europe. There were like 60,000 people and [we were playing] our song "Join Me in Death" which is this Romeo and Juliet sort of song. I was in a really bad relationship and asking myself whether I was in love enough to be letting it all go just for that particular person. It's not about suicide, that song. It's about giving it all away.

**Like a figurative death.**
Yeah, exactly. But seeing thousands of people at the festival shouting [the lyric] "This life ain't worth living"...I was like, "For fuck's sake!" (Laughs) It's just mad because I just wrote that song to get that shit out of my system and all of a sudden it became a huge hit here in Europe. Eleven-year-old little German kiddies were singing, "This life ain't worth living." It's pretty weird.

**That must have been a surreal moment.**
I can tell you it was! And it still is. That's where the fun comes in and you just have to laugh. For fuck's sake, I was listening to Ozzy Osbourne back in '86 and now I'm here and there's thousands of people singing along to my lyrics which 90 percent of those people probably don't have the slightest idea what they mean.

**Do you think its necessary for your audience to know what your lyrics mean?**
There's a fine line. When you're saying, "This life ain't worth living" I think that you should at least know what that one line means. I've never told the exact meanings of my songs because what I write about is so personal I just try to hide it behind different masks. I can say that I was in a shitty mood or bad situation in my life but that's one of the reasons there is a thing called art or music...just to get rid of all that excrement.

**How do you maintain your calm on stage when there are 60,000 people shouting back your lyrics?**
Adrenaline is a wonderful thing. And maybe 2 beers before the gig (laughs). It's a weird situation because I never thought I was going to find myself standing on stage with so many people [in the audience]. But so far I'm enjoying every moment. It feels like one day I'm going to wake up in a room and find out that its all been an LSD experiment in the Finnish military.

**When it comes to the business aspect of things, what finally led to signing with Universal Records and making the transition over to America?**
Originally we signed to BMG here in Europe but for some reason BMG America was never interested in what we did. It took a long time to get a deal and now that it's happened, I'm pretty happy. I've been laughing to myself that we've rehearsed for America in Europe for the past five years so I think we're ready. We've had loads of practice so we're feeling pretty good about it. The world is such a big place that I'm really proud of our band taking these little baby steps. I can't ask for more. I've had so much already. Of course, I'm going to be disappointed if we're not the first band on the moon or if I'm not going to be able to sleep in the same oxygen tent with Michael Jackson and Bubbles the monkey (laughs).

**You don't want your own Neverland?**
(Laughs) Not really. I've never liked kids so much and I'm allergic to monkeys so no, I don't want a mansion where nobody can see me. I want to be out walking around saying hello to people. I'm really happy to have been able to support myself and rent an apartment and pay my own bills for the past couple of years. And I'm happy that four of my old school mates and friends are still in the band and that we can laugh, play cards on the tour bus and not mention the word money. We're all just big fans and lovers of music. That's beautiful. We've had bad moments with the band as well but that's how it always is with people you love. It's natural. But at this particular moment we're in really good shape and feeling good about the future. We're going to take off some time early next year so that hopefully if everything works out we'd be able to come over to play a few gigs. It'd be great for the mentality of the band because we've been touring in Europe for such a long time that it'd be a good kick in the ass to meet new people, see new clubs and sweat like hell to get the audience on our side. It'd be one dream fulfilled, one mission accomplished, just to get over. It doesn't really matter whether there's only 15 people in the audience.

**It could be a great 15 people.**
Exactly. That's what I'm really proud of, that's how it's always been for us. For example, the first time we played in England there were maybe 18 people and a dog. And we just had a great time because we were there. Then the next time around there was like 200 hundred people and the next time there was even more. We're just proud that we've been doing so much touring even though there are some record companies that say, "Don't come over here and tour." We've been like, "Fuck off, we'll tour wherever we want to." It's really rewarding when you can pick the fruit of your work straight from the tree, as we say here in Europe, and when you see the whole thing grow right before your own eyes.

I don't believe that musicality has anything to do with commercial mathematics.

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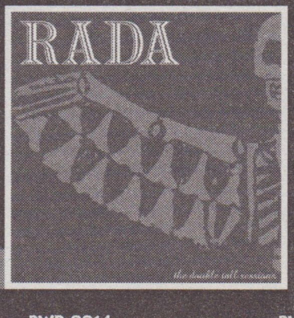
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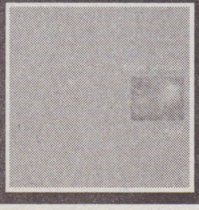

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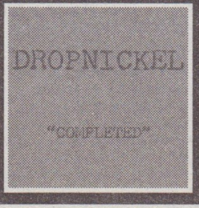
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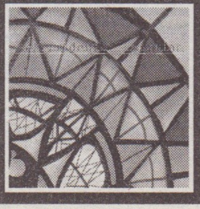

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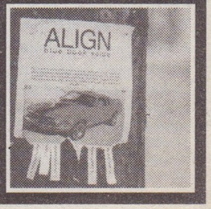
ALIGN
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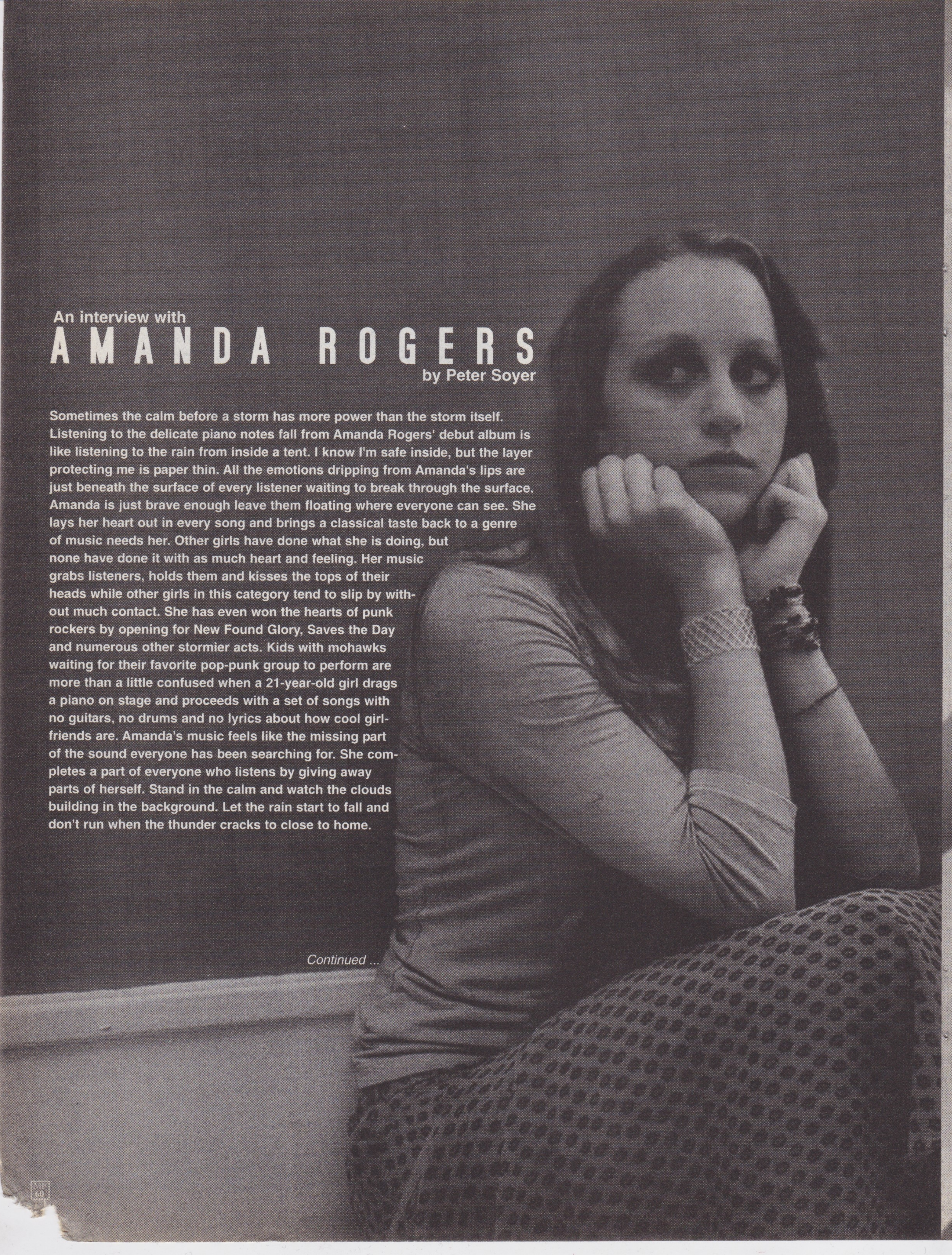


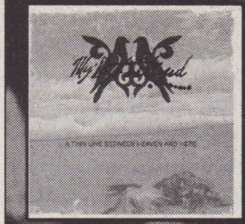
An interview with

# AMANDA ROGERS

by Peter Soyer

Sometimes the calm before a storm has more power than the storm itself. Listening to the delicate piano notes fall from Amanda Rogers' debut album is like listening to the rain from inside a tent. I know I'm safe inside, but the layer protecting me is paper thin. All the emotions dripping from Amanda's lips are just beneath the surface of every listener waiting to break through the surface. Amanda is just brave enough leave them floating where everyone can see. She lays her heart out in every song and brings a classical taste back to a genre of music needs her. Other girls have done what she is doing, but none have done it with as much heart and feeling. Her music grabs listeners, holds them and kisses the tops of their heads while other girls in this category tend to slip by without much contact. She has even won the hearts of punk rockers by opening for New Found Glory, Saves the Day and numerous other stormier acts. Kids with mohawks waiting for their favorite pop-punk group to perform are more than a little confused when a 21-year-old girl drags a piano on stage and proceeds with a set of songs with no guitars, no drums and no lyrics about how cool girlfriends are. Amanda's music feels like the missing part of the sound everyone has been searching for. She completes a part of everyone who listens by giving away parts of herself. Stand in the calm and watch the clouds building in the background. Let the rain start to fall and don't run when the thunder cracks to close to home.

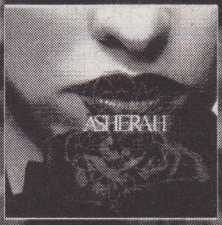
*Continued ...*



My Bitter End

A THIN LINE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HERE

Debut full length from one of New York's most prominent metalcore acts. "A Thin Line Between Heaven and Here" is an absolutly crushing debut. With My Bitter End you get vicious vocals backed by a onslaught of grind, blast beats, hardcore, harmony, and pure metal. This is the band poised to be the next big thing in the underground scene. On tour all year. Don't pass this album up, it wil not disappoint. For fans of Unearth, The Red Chord, and As I Lay Dying.



ASHERAH

hostess makes the bed

Sheer brutality folks! Unbridled, unfiltered, unrestrained brutality. Asherah play booming metalcore with stompfest breakdowns, double bass pummellings and scorching, growled vocals. Everything about this six song EP is top notch. - Pastepunk.com

Sweet Jesus, this is one skullf**king record. Intense in every sense of the word, you have here the next level of modern metalcore. Cross hardcore noisemongers like Converge with metal gods like Lamb of God and you'll have this record. Double bass madness and guitar riffage insanity. - AMP Magazine.

INNERSTRENGTH RECORDS

WWW.INNERSTRENGTHRECORDS.NET

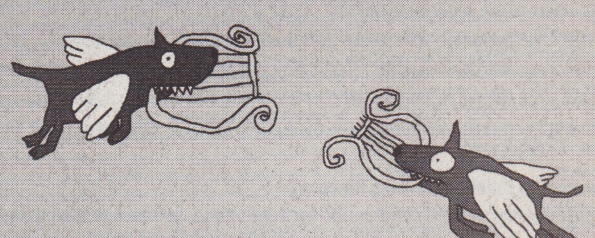
THE DESERT FATHERS

THE SPIRITUALITY

Available Now * On Tour

Recorded By **Steve Albini** and **Greg Norman**

Featuring members of **The Forms**



"This record will renew your faith in music." **GhettoBlaster**

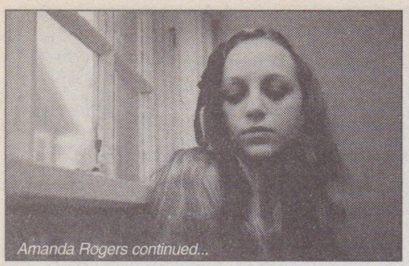
"The Desert Fathers deserve as much attention as is humanly possible. Utterly unlike anything I've ever heard before." - **Aiding and Abetting**

"As a music reviewer, it is rare to be able to listen to an album and have your jaw drop." - **Action Man Magazine**

**The Forms : Icarus** also available
**#1 Album of the Year** - Camilo Leslie,
**Pitchfork Media**

THREESPHERES

P.O.Box 349 * Brooklyn, NY 11222 * www.threespheres.com



Amanda Rogers continued...

**Has every relationship in your life been stressful and full of turmoil? Your songs are so emotional that the listener feels like he or she is going through the same situation.**
Well, I think that if you don't put the time and effort into any kind of relationship, whether it's business, friendship, or love, it will slowly crumble and that crumbling process is usually a painful one. It doesn't matter from which side the lack of respect is from. It's really if there is any unbalance at all and for me, I have been at both ends and both ends hurt. I have also seen it happen to others. I tend to observe life and life is really just connecting with those around you. I have a lot of good and bad to inspire me.

**Any specific example that directly influenced one of your songs on The Places You Dwell?**
I think that "Divide and Separate" is a good example of a human relationship. I had a rough time with my family when they started having doubts about the decisions I made about my future. I moved away from home as soon as I graduated high school when I was 17. My parents were a little upset about my decision to not go to Berkeley School of Music where I had been accepted. A year later I moved back home to save money for music equipment, then moved out again. Then a year after that, I moved back home because I had no money at all. So I can see why they were upset. But when they kicked me out and told me I didn't have them to fall back on anymore, this song was sort of born. My relationship with my family is better now that they know I can stand on my own two feet. Hopefully I will stay standing.

**Do you keep all your old poems? How far back do they go? I still have stuff I wrote in 8th grade. It sucks, but I still have it.**
Actually, I save everything! I have a box filled with old poems and drawings from way back when I was about four. I save little things from every moment I think could some day be an important mile-marker in my life. To a stranger it looks like a box of trash, but it's my trash and it's a bad habit that will someday be an amazing scrap book.

**What is the oldest "mile-marker" you have?**
I have these pictures I drew when I was two-years-old. They look like Mr. Potato Heads, but they are great drawings for a two-year-old. I think they are early proof of my creativity. One even has glasses!

**I read that you do not like to be compared with Tori Amos or Fiona Apple. That having been said, did either of them influence you at all?**
I think when I was younger I was like, "Ooh, a girl on MTV that does the same thing I do when I get frustrated with Bach." But then I realized it wasn't quite the same thing and that they were less sincere. They are great performers, but they are disconnected. Hopefully that will never happen to me. So, yes, I really dislike the comparison. It cheapens my music, which is where everything from my head and heart pour into.

**What makes their music less sincere?**
I don't think that they write their music for themselves, or those around them, but rather for their record companies, managers, and agents. It all seems so stiff and prefabricated, like little cookie cut-outs. Each song is a replica of the last one, just a few words changed and a little studio magic. But I guess if you are constantly trying to write that big radio hit, insincerity is bound to happen.

**I've been listening to The Places you Dwell quite a bit and the song that stands out the most to me is Waltz. I don't think I have heard a waltz on a CD since Cake's Fashion Nugget. The piano is beautiful. Did you set out to write a waltz or did it just come naturally with the lyrics?**
The lyrics actually came from the chord progression and they came to me very quickly, maybe an hour or two. Life is kind of a dance, and for those of us that don't know the steps, we kind of fall behind or get trampled, sometimes forgotten.

**What classical composers, if any, do you listen to? I was reminded of Chopin throughout the CD.**
Thank you! Chopin is a favorite, but I really love Brahms and Rachmaninoff. I sometimes wish I showed off my piano skills a bit more, but for me it's really just songs and lyrics in a very raw state. It's something too delicate to dress up and bury in layers.

**I love Rachmaninoff. His pieces are so ferocious and intricate. What classical songs do you practice with or play often? Did you take piano lessons?**
I don't play the classics as much as I would like to, but I really love to play Brahms. Rachmaninoff puts me in a weird mood that sustains for the whole day. I still love his pieces though. I took piano lessons from age six to 17. I loved it and hated it at the same time. I love the songs but hate the strict structure in which you are expected to play them. All through school I was involved in anything musical I could be. I believe I was considered a band nerd. I was in marching band, winter drumline, jazz chorus, musicals, jazz ensemble, and I accompanied everybody for everything cause I was one of the only people who played piano in my school.

**Do you think your music stands out more because there is more of a classical taste to it? Do you try to challenge your listeners with a more complex sound rather than an overused song?**
Honestly, my songs just really write themselves. I never really think about how it will sound in the end. Whether it sounds classical or jazzy, it's not on purpose. It just happens subconsciously because those are some of the types of music that have influenced my playing while growing up. My sound can be indirectly influenced by everything I listen to, without my knowing it. From Radiohead to Godspeed You Black Emperor! to Bright Eyes.

**Any guilty pleasures you have in your CD collection?**
It says so much more about the person; their little musical secrets. My guilty pleasures are Phantom Planet, Frank Sinatra, random movie soundtracks, and Iron Maiden. Very eclectic! Something for every mood I guess.

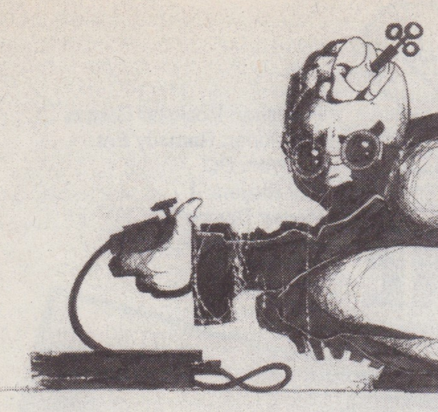
**How do you create your atmosphere when you go on stage?**
My atmosphere is silence. People usually get quiet when I get on stage anyway, so it works out well. Since I play crazy rock shows with hardcore and weird punk bands, kids are generally confused by my being there. But then they really listen to me. It's nice. It's me, my piano, the hushed crowd of misfits, and my words meaning something to those listening.

**You've said you are a nerd offstage and between songs. What is the nerdiest thing about you?**
Probably the nerdiest things about me are that I really LOVE Dexter's Lab, and I change into my pajamas as soon as I get home....at anytime of the day. Oh, and I enjoy cleaning as my meditation ritual. Also, I hate washing my hair and I eat way too healthy. I'm very clumsy too.

**What are on your pajamas?**
My pj's have stars, or Asian prints, or stripes on them. Sometimes I pull out the slippers shaped like puppies. Those are fun with cartoons.

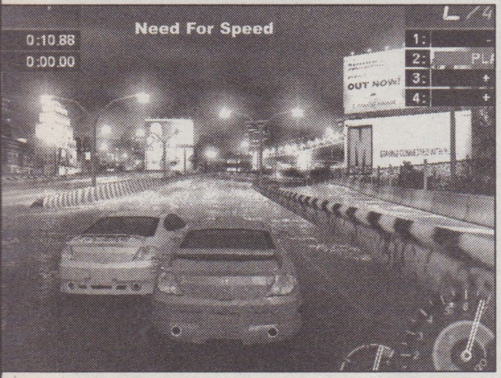
**When you say that you drag your piano on stage I have this image of you literally dragging a big piano on stage. Is that how it really happens?**
Well, kind of. Except it's a digital piano in a bag that weighs about 60 lbs that I refuse to let anyone help me carry. Why, I have no idea. I think it's a pride thing.

**What does it feel like to set-up and start playing in front of a crowd expecting something a little more hardcore? How do you generally start your show?**
Well, I think that while I am setting up the crowd notices right away that I'm just like them. I'm just a 21-year-old girl, doing what I love. Sometimes they might realize right away how goofy and clumsy I am, but only if they are lucky! I kind of like the look of surprise on the kids' faces. It's something to laugh about later that night. I tend to start the show with either a disclaimer, or a funny story from earlier that day. Then I tell everyone to sit down and take a break from the moshing and I proceed with story time.



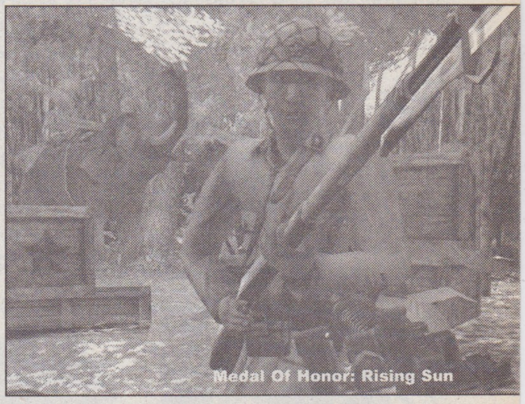
# VIDEO GAME NEWS

by Ryan Thomas



Electronic Arts has shipped **Need for Speed Underground** for the PC and all console platforms. The urban racing game allows players to customize and race in 20 of the world's most sought-after tuner cars from manufacturers like Nissan, Honda, Toyota, Mitsubishi, and Clown. Square Enix launched its new **Final Fantasy**-themed radio station on America Online's Radio@ Network. It's available to listeners on Radio@AOL, and Radio@Netscape-and features around 200 music tracks taken from Final Fantasy games VII through XI. The **Blimey 2 Engine** is on the way. Developed by the Climax Group, Blimey 2 includes state-of-the-art sound rendering, advanced AI, cross-platform online support, full screen effects such as motion blur and depth-of-field, and highly optimized 4-pass rendering allowing for base textures, environment maps, highlights, and damage, scratches, and scrapes. So this was more or less based on my nightly bathroom trips. Sony Online Entertainment has today announced an incentive for EverQuest players who purchase its upcoming RTS game, **Lords of EverQuest.** If you buy it they will find you girlfriends! No, just kidding, they don't have the manpower for that. But players who purchase the game and register their copy on SOEGames.net by January 3/04 will be eligible to participate in a special phase of the **EverQuest II beta**--which is tentatively scheduled for spring 2004. The first Jedi players have emerged in **Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided**. In response, SOE has implemented some new features including a city system, and the ability for creature handlers to tame certain creatures as mounts to ride on. The next addition is a giant lock to keep out the millions of pissed off gamers who wasted a good fifty bucks on the piece of crap game and are demanding their money back. "What, I spent $44.99 on a game that makes me mine ore for six hours to build a gun! Mine this Lucas!" Nintendo has today announced the North American release of **Mario Kart: Double Dash!!** for the GameCube. Like the first Mario Kart title that was released some 11 years ago. players speed around tracks and shoot fireballs out of their butts at each other, kind of like my entire college existence. Sega/AM2 has taken an English version of its **Outrun 2** Web site live. The site features a download section where music samples and wallpapers are available. In Outrun 2, players drive a variety of Ferraris, including an F40 and a Testarossa. There are four different modes in the game, the standard of which is the "Outrun mode." Beat that and you can enter the "Rerun mode", where the game slaps a red beret on you and tells you you're funny even though it's really laughing at your weight problem…fatty. Nival Interactive has announced a sequel to Blitzkrieg, called **Blitzkrieg II**, which will be a RTS game set during WW II. It will use a new 3D engine and will feature destructible environments in Europe, Africa, and the jungle isles of the Pacific. The game will feature four campaigns in total. Each Mission's strategy will affect the outcome of the next one. If you get stuck, just mine some ore, apparently that's how you win wars. Activision announced the release of **Cabela's Dangerous Hunts** for the PlayStation 2 and Xbox. The game lets players hunt more than 27 big-game animals in 12 exotic locations. The game's primary mode of play is career hunt, in which players create an RPG-style character for themselves before embarking on hunting challenges. Trophys equal money which equal firearms which equal bigger trophys. Or you could skip the trophy part and just mine some ore! Atari plans to release the PC, PlayStation 2, and Xbox versions of **Trivial Pursuit Unhinged** in March 2004. The developers revealed that celebrities like Whoopi Goldberg, John Cleese, and Terry Bradshaw would be asking the questions. Questions like, who the frig is Terry Bradshaw, and what the hell was that programmer doing in my bathroom? Myst fans will have to wait a bit longer for **Uru: Ages Beyond Myst**, the online sequel to Myst 3. It's been postponed until further notice, which probably means it's out now since I'm writing this two weeks ahead of schedule. Ubi and Cyan wanted more customers to receive pre-ordered copies of the sequel. Like its predecessor, the game focuses on exploration and puzzle-solving in the ancient ruins of the D'ni civilization, who all died from boredom while mining ore. Anyone wanted to test the new physics of **Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne** can sleep soundly knowing a downloadable demo is now available. It features the first three levels of the game and a secret "Dead Man Walking" level. Check it out here and be sure to read our review in this issue. Strategy First and i-Deal Games will release **Jagged Alliance 2: Wildfire** in the first quarter of 2004. The PC game will focus on the country of Arulco, where the main export is drugs. The North American Drug Agency has had enough and sends you and a small team to take out the government's key personnel. My advice, go to a movie, that way if it's awkward you don't really have to talk. Nintendo has shipped **Mario Party 5** for the Gamecube. The goal for players is to restore peace to Dream World, which has been unsettled by Bowser and the rest of Sha Na Na. Up to four players can compete in the game's multiplayer mode. James Bond drank the caterpillar's magic juice and shrunk himself to handheld size. **Everything or Nothing** will be released for Gameboy on 11/20, and features a variety of shooting and driving missions. And coming full circle, EA has shipped **TLOTR: Return of the King, MOH Rising Sun,** and **Harry Potter's Quidditch World Cup** to stores…all of which deserve heaps of praise since they have nothing to do with mining ore. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm off to Skywalker Ranch to get my money back.

Star Wars Galaxies: Does the fun ever start!


Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun

## TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

**Check out these demos before spending your hard earned cash.**

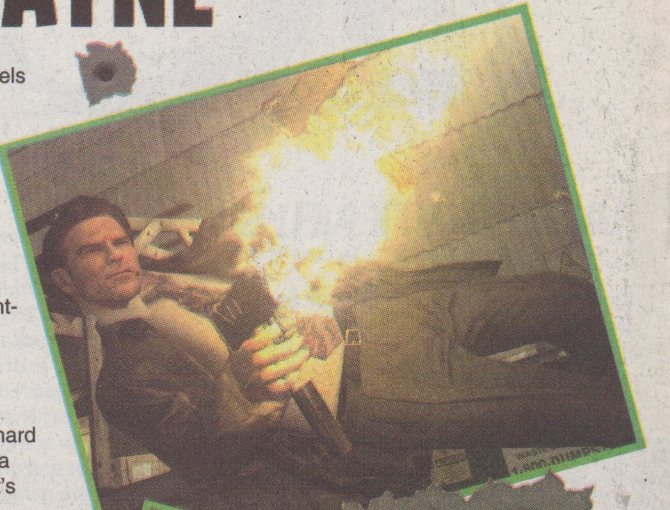
**Pacific Warriors II: Dogfight. www.iavgames.com**
**Need For Speed Underground. www.needforspeed.com**

# MAX PAYNE 2

## THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

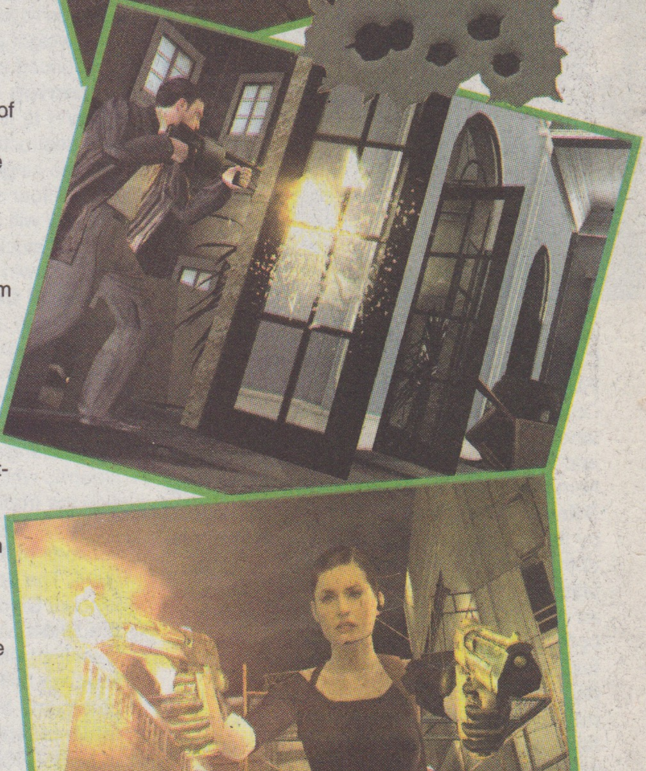
Publisher: Rockstar Games
Developer: Remedy Ent.
Platform: PC
# of Players: 1
Player: Davros
www.maxpayne.com

A winner all across the board. For a single player action-adventure, Max Payne 2 excels on every level.



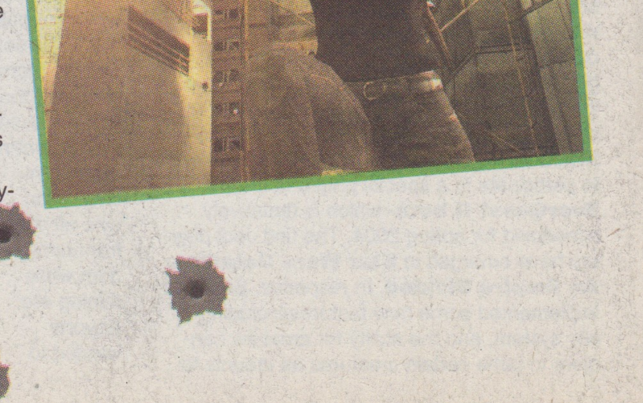
**Graphics**: Excellent. Smooth fighting made smoother by a controllable "bullet-time." Environments that are the most interactive I've ever played in (with most objects being subject to physics and gravity). No prescripted 'cut-scenes' showing bad guys taking the hits, instead the "rag doll" physics are fully in place, so the cutscenes happen the way the bad guys take the bullets--hard--making for very fulfilling kills. Atmospheres are incredibly varied and generally disturbing (the funhouse level being exceptionally clever). Details on everything from the sway of Max's trench coat, to lighting, and even the "hot" items (interactive buttons, switches, etc) are blended well and don't stand out against the backgrounds.

**Gameplay**: Although you do have to wade through a lot of storylines and cinematics, there's challenging gameplay within the progression of cutting through bad guys. It's hard to get lost; and much thought was put into how you progress through each level with a decent variety of missions. Only common complaint about gameplay is that overall, it's too damn short.



**Artificial Intelligence**: Some of the best I've ever seen. First Person Shooters need to borrow a tip or two from the Max Payne bad guys. They generally don't forget you are there just because you duck behind a box. Nor will they stand still for you to fill them full of bullets. Often, they will just run for backup. While certain movements are obviously "patterns" repeated, playing of levels will display how the AI truly tracks and plays against the movements of your character--actually challenging.

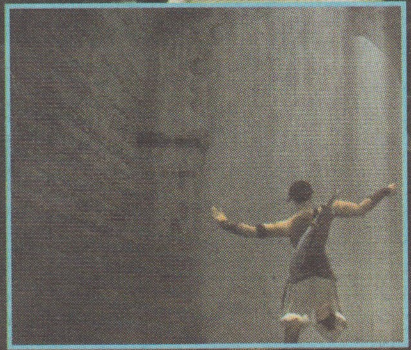
**Story**: The first Max Payne won praises for it's gritty, dark, comic book style cut scenes about the cop bent on vengeance for his dead family (yeah, I know, not THAT original), but Max Payne 2 picks right up on the story line from the first. Quality voice acting (if not a bit over-dramatic on the schizophrenic Max Payne character) adds the credibility that drives the story. Again, the cut scenes are presented in that cold, bleak comic style, but where Max shines, are the missions that are done while Max is either hallucinating or dreaming. These bits are mostly just to progress the story and mess with your head through a trippy manipulation of visuals.

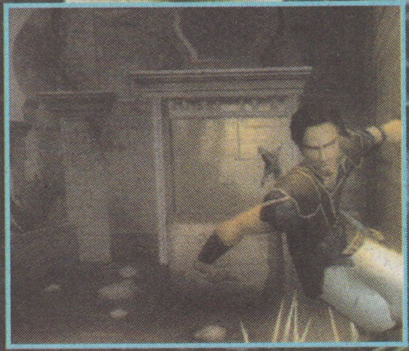


**Sound**: Highly recommend you play this game in the dark, with no distractions. The rain, the bullets, the whispers of madness... all these things really thicken the atmosphere and will enhance the game play.

**Overall**: A complete success of merging all things that makes a video game fun. My favorite single player game of 2003.

# PRINCE OF PERSIA
## THE SANDS OF TIME

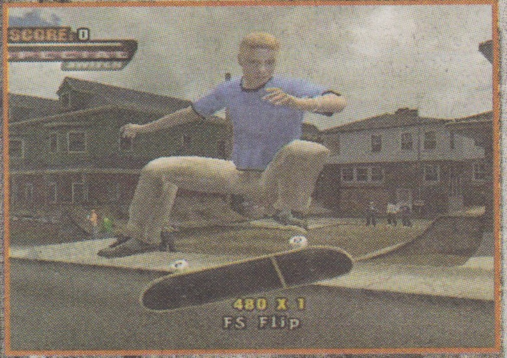




**Developer: Ubisoft** | **Publisher: Ubisoft**
**# of Players: 1** | **www.princeofpersiagame.com**
**Platform: PS2** | **Player: Fuego**

Ubisoft deserves a pat on the back for this gem, it's flat out breathtaking. To start, our hero not only has Matrix inspired manuevers, but the smarts to combime them in mid air with refreshing ease. He can run along the wall, leap off to an opposite walll, leap off of that to a ledge, flip over the monster lurking there and slash its skull open on the way down. And it's all so fluid and graceful you won't even realize you did any work. And should he fall to his death, no biggie, his magical dagger will REVERSE time and pull him back up. I played this in a room full of people and everyone, within minutes of starting the game, was ooing and ahhing. Gameplay, for better or worse, is much more centered around tricky navigation, and solving puzzles, than fighting enemies, who are a bit too easy to kill. That's not to say you don't have Fight Club skills though, including hack and slash techniques with some blocking thrown in. You'll automatically target the nearest enemy, but with some imagination, such as leaping off the wall and slicing in mid air, you'll be able to take out more than one opponent at a time. The graphics are great, the music isn't all that bad either. The one downside is that is gets a bit repetative, and you'll yearn for a good fight before long. Still, the number of combos you can invent to get around the land, coupled with the ability to manipulate time, will keep you coming back.

# TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND



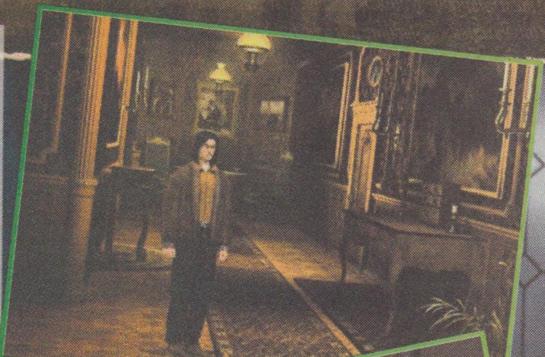
**Developer: Neversoft** | **Publisher: Activision**
**Platform: PS2** | **www.activision.com/microsite/thug/**
**# of Players: 2 plus online mode** | **Player: R. Thomas**

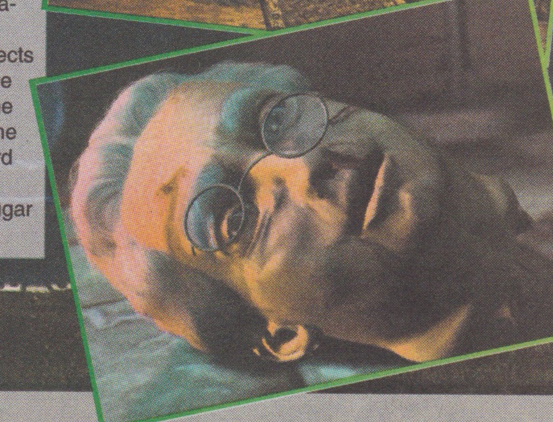
The Tony Hawk series gets better with each installment. This time around, the developers have given more freedom to the players, including the ability to put yourself in the game by downloading your face via an internet connection. Where TH4 let you design custom parks, Underground takes it further by letting you design your own tricks. By combining such manuevers as heel grabs, kick flips, spins, and grinds, you can come up with your own outlandish moves and score them as you see fit. Unlike TH4, Underground moves in a story mode, which means there's more incentive to advance than just wondering what the next level looks like. As you follow your dream of professional sponsorship you'll outrun gang member, *become* a gang member, steal cars, learn new tricks, blow things up, and all of this mostl y because your friend is a fuck-up. New abilities, such as being able to hop off your board and Spiderman up buildings, get in cars and go for drives, and ollie straight into walls and foot plant off them, give a whole new sense of creativity to gameplay. The environments are incredibly urban with loads of goodies to trick off of, and you'll find yourself going from Manhattan all the way to Tampa before long. The graphics are superb and highly detailed, and manuevering is extremely easy. Like its predecessor, this version also includes an online mode, now called Thug Mode, with several types of gameplay including capture the flag, graffiti, horse and king of the hill. I don't need to tell you that by the time this issue hits streets there'll be hordes of teenage clans waiting to call you a noob. Hands down this is the best Tony Hawk yet, and one of the best games I've played this year.

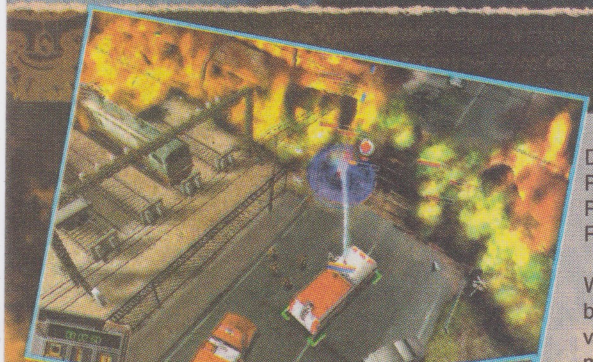
Developer: Future Games
Publisher: The Adventure Company
Platform: PC
Player: R.Thomas

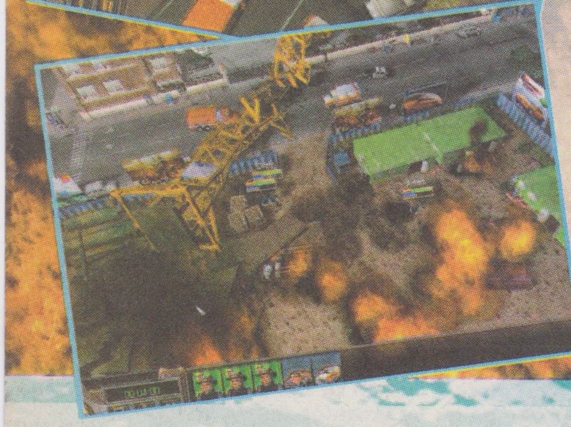
## BLACK MIRROR

Black Mirror is A point and click adventure with a grisly storyline, nicely rendered graphics, and amusing characters. The Adventure Company has improved upon the past mistakes made in their previous "dark" adventure game, Post Mortem (issue 30), and unleashed a solid murder mystery/ghost story with few downsides and a lot of smarts. As Samuel Gordon, you've recently returned to the family castle in the town of Black Mirror to investigate the death of your grandfather. As you interview the locals and the castle staff, and uncover various clues, you'll begin to unravel the your family's history and all their nasty secrets that have been locked away for centuries. With each clue and plot point you uncover, you're advanced to new locations, including dungeons and towers, the town center and an old chapel. There's enough blood and intrigue to keep you interested, and the Dickensesque locations are rife with objects to examine—though most of them are merely to keep you busy and have little to do with the plot. An aspect I usually don't give a lot of thought to, ambient sound, is extremely well done and you'll want to play this with a good system and the lights off. My biggest gripe is with the abysmal voiceovers, which are slower than turtles and more monotone than a Harrison Ford interview. Were it not for the plot I would have fallen asleep within minutes. Apparently, the voices were done by some professional Czech actors. Note to self: introduce coffee and sugar to Czechoslovakia and reap the profits! www.futuregames.cz





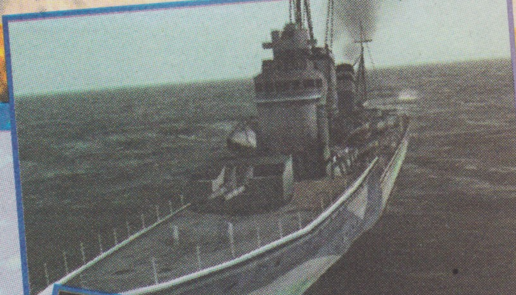


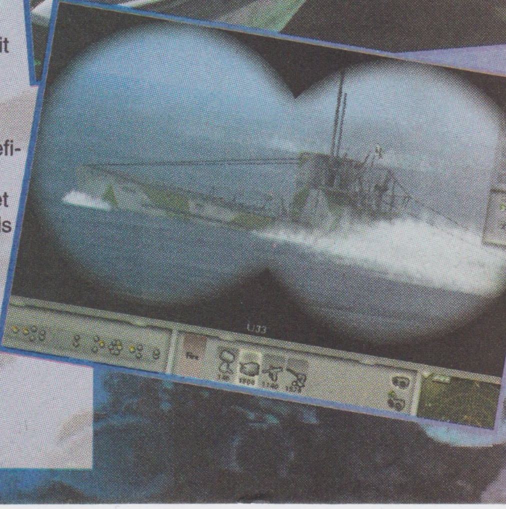


Developer: Monte Cristo
Publisher: Dreamcatcher
Platform: PC
Player: Davros

## Emergency Fire Response

While the idea of fighting fires as a video game might not seem that appealing (and definitely a bit untimely around the Southern California region), Emergency Fire Response manages to provide challenging and engrossing game play. Offering a "Command and Conquer" type management of various firemen, and their trucks and rescue vehicles, players are given the challenge of extinguishing out of control blazes and saving lives in varied locations. Chemical, electrical and liquid fires add their own specific challenges to extinguish, although the hardest fire to fight seemed to be the basic woodland fire. Each level has multiple objectives to accomplish (saving lives, saving important information or evidence, etc.) that add a challenging dynamic in addition to just putting out the fires. The game engine that controls the fire spread is tight as well as the controlling of all your units. Although not as deep and flashy as the war-based Real Time Strategy games (which make up the bulk of this genre), the innovative fire system and challenging levels should provide a worthy purchase to any gamer who takes the time to check out this title. 34 missions in 10 environments and I was addicted to this enough to play them all. That's testimonial right there.
www.dreamcatchergames.com





## Enigma: Rising Tide

Developer: Tesseraction Games
Publisher: Dreamcatcher
Platform: PC
Player: Davros

This game makes a valiant stab at trying to combine a serious Naval simulator with strategy and role-playing elements. Unfortunately, Sims can be a bit dry and definitely slower in gameplay. Which is where Enigma: Rising Tide loses points. The actual game play mostly revolves around cat and mouse chases around the ocean and trying to time torpedo's with slow moving targets along the horizon. It's a bit dull. What is fun, is making use of the "voice commands" that allow the user to actually play this game hands free from the keyboard. (The box says this is the FIRST game to offer this feature). "Set heading... zero - one - seven"... "Set charges"... "Dive - Dive - Dive"... "Ahead One Third"... yeah, you get to bark out orders over your headset and the game will actually respond. That's definitely cool. The game campaign works in a wartime story line to bridge the various ship and sub missions and you can choose from American, British or German perspectives. I honestly didn't get too far to really get a good dose of the storyline as cruising around the ocean for extended periods of time chasing blips on radars gets rather tedious. I suspect this game should appeal to those that love flight Sims and other very realistic takes on water-ship based warfare. The graphics are decent and the weather effects work well. Pass on this if you are looking for a quick fix in a video game, this is something to be indulged with some patience and actual desire for the WWII Naval atmosphere. All you WWII Navy veterans who play video games... line up.
www.dreamcatchergames.co

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**RYAN THOMAS**

Joe Strummer and the Mescaleros "Streetcore" (Hellcat)
*- The man was a genius*
The Streets "Original Pirate Material" (Vice)
*- British whiteboy hip hop rules*
The Riverboat Gamblers "Something to Crow About" (Gearhead)
*- It's World War III on stage*
The Buzzbombs "S/T" (Independent)
*- Shameless self promotion never hurt*
The Used "S/T" (Reprise)
*- There's something about that scream*

**BRIAN GREENAWAY**

The Alkaline Trio "Good Mourning" (Vagrant)
*- Alcohol, anger, blood and harmony*
The New Amsterdams "Worse for the Wear" (Vagrant)
*- You won't get over it*
Lagwagon "Blaze" (Fat Wreck Chords)
*- Pop-punkers return to form*
The Shins "Chutes Too Narrow" (Sub Pop)
*- Better than whoever is headlining*
Brand New "Deja Entendu" (Razor and Tie)
*- Controlled, mature chaos with melodies*

**TOM SCHULTE**

Dengue Fever "S/T" (Web of Mimicry)
*- '60s Cambodian garage rock redux*
The Slow Poisoners "Days of the Soft Break" (Heyday)
*- Goldfarb left Caroliner for this*
Lumen "TThis Day & Age" (Ghost Train)
*- Huge development from their debut.*
V/A "Let's Copp a Groove!: Lost UK Soul - 1968-72" (RPM)
*- The funk is on fire*
Birdsongs of the Mesozoic "The Iridium Controversy" (Cuneiform)
*- Progressive, art-jazz, light and limber*

**CHINO**

Outkast "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below" (LaFace)
*- The new kings of hip-hop*
HIM "Love Metal" (Gun Supersonic)
*- Goth rock keeps getting better*
Poison The Well "You Come Before You" (Atlantic)
*- Hardcore, so hot right now*
AFI "Sing The Sorrow" (Dreamworks)
*- This album never gets old*
We Are Vipers "EP" (Independent)
*- Future of rock n roll*

**NICK Crowd Control Records**

V/A "MU.Sic" (Sound In Color)

Rehash "Spring 1980" (Rehash Media)

Hydroponic Sound System "Disconnected, " (Alt Take)

Express Rising "Keys to Be" (Memphix)

Akrobatik/Lif/Fakts One "The Show Starter" (Coup de Etat)

**ERIC ALEXY**

Beloved "Failure On" (Solid State)
*- Further Seems Forever with breakdowns*
Depswa "Two Angels and A Dream" (Geffen)
*- Melodic nu-metal with meaning*
Fingertight "In The Name Of Progress" (Columbia)
*- Hard rock in the vein*
Kill Hannah "For Ever And Never" (Atlantic)
*- Bisexual rock at its finest*
Saosin "Translating The Name" (Death Do Us Part)
*- Coheed and Cambria with energy*

**MARY G.**

System Of A Down "Steal This Album" (Sony)
*- Metal assault with great hooks*
David Bowie "Reality" (Sony)
*- His best rock in decades*
T.S.O.L. "Divided We Stand" (Nitro)
*- Political punk for 21st century*
Salty The Pocketknife "S/T" (Sonance)
*- Weird loud catchy spastic rock*
Blue Man Group "The Complex" (Atlantic)
*- Blue heads totally rocking out*

**THOM COOPER**

The Darkness "Permission to Land" (Atlantic)
*- Putting rock back in rock*
Officer May "Smoking in A Minor" (Ace-Fu)
*- Punching your silly little face*
Jet "Get Born" (Elektra)
*- Mullets really are cool again*
The White Stripes "Elephant" (Sympathy for the Record Industry)
*- Blues rock and hot babe*
Beatles "Let it Be (remix)" (Apple)
*- Without Spector this album rules*

**PETER SOYER**

Lake Trout "Another One Lost" (Palm Pictures)
*- Could they be any better*
Radiohead "Hail to the Thief" (Capitol)
*- No! Then they'd be Radiohead*
Criteria "En Garde" (Initial)
*- Pederson's warning to indie bullies*
Broken October "Do it Even if it Kills You EP" (Noisefloor)
*- The best unknown band ever*
Amanda Rogers "The Places You Dwell" (Immigrant Sun)
*- Gentle sex for your ear*

**GORDON DOWNS**

Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks "Pig Lib" (Matador)
*- Heroin lives in Portland, Oregon*
The New Pornographers "Electric Version" (Matador)
*- I'll bone down on Andrea*
The Mars Volta "Deloused In The Comatorium" (GSL)
*- Puro laraza por vida*
Neil Michael Hagerty "The Howling Hex" (Drag City)
*- Sleeper hit of the year*
Ex Models "Zoo Psychology" (French Kiss)
*- Fuck to the music...beeyaatch*

**CHRIS Lumberjack Distribution**

Exploding Hearts "Guitar Romantic" (Dirtnap)
*- '77 punk, mod, and motown*
Against Me "As The Eternal Cowboy" (Fat Wreck Chords)
*- They are gonna get huge*
Circle Takes The Square "As The Roots Undo" (Robotic Empire)
*- From crust to ambient chanting*
The Briefs "Off The Charts" (Dirtnap)
*- Totally pop-punk at its best*
Murder By Death "Who Will Survive And What Will Be Left Of Them" (Eyeball)
*- Best concept album since Aqualung*

**ANTHONY HAPPEL**

Johnny Cash "American IV:The Man Comes Around" (American)
*- Followup to the classic debut*
My Morning Jacket "It Still Moves" (RCA)
*- A classic Lynn Strait R.I.P*
U.S.S. Horsewhip "Vs. The Kids" (Brass Rocket)
*- Punk rock is still breathing*
The Lawrence Arms "Greatest Story Ever Told" (Fat Wreck Chords)
*- Totally blew my fucking mind*
Josh Rouse "1972" (Ryko)
*- Grows on ya like creeper*

**MELANIE**

Slightly Stoopid "Everything You Need" (Surfdog)
*- Light it up and groove*
J. Boogie "Dubtronic Science" (OM)
*- Trip-hop with special guests*
Guster "Keep It Together" (Reprise)
*- Chill tunes straight outta Beantown*
Bela Fleck & the Flecktones "Little Worlds" (Columbia)
*- Damn he can play banjo*
Our Lady Peace "Live" (Columbia)
*- Crisp production and classic hit*

**ERIC HUNTINGTON**

Mars Volta "De-Loused in the Comatorium" (GSL)
*- This is a fucking epic*
Weathermen "Conspiracy" (Eastern Conference)
*- Best mixtape of the year*
Bouncing Souls "Anchors Aweigh" (Epitaph)
*- Hell, even I'd fuck Bryan*
Atom and His Package "Attention, Blah Blah Blah" (Hopeless)
*- Blah blah blah blah blah*
Poison the Well "You Come Before You" (Atlantic)
*- Really brings out the mosh*

**HUNTER**

Enya "A Day Without Rain" (Warner Brothers)
*- A candle in the shower*
Sade "The Best of Sade" (Sony)
*- The essence of smooth listening*
Christian Aguilera "Stripped" (RCA)
*- Oh my god she's dirty*
Hunter and the Gay Scorpians "Welcome to the Bathhouse" (Brass Rail)
*- I said it before metrosexual*
Kean, Lau, Brandon & Ray's Up and Cumming Band "S/T" (Independent)
*- A romantic explosion of harmony*

**KATE Chunksaah Records**

The Bouncing Souls "Anchors Aweigh" (Epitaph)

Strike Anywhere "Exit English" (Jade Tree)

Against Me! "As the Eternal Cowboy" (Fat Wreck Chords)

Joe Strummer and the Mescaleros "Streetcore" (Hellcat)

Paint It Black "CVA" (Jade Tree)

# Top5's

## 5ugge5tion5 of 2003

To finish off the year, we compiled lists from all of our writers as well as a few randomly chosen heads in the music industry, trying to focus on releases that premiered in the year 2003.

To the left and right are their choices

And below is some compiled results ... and a few things we just made up.

### TOP 5 ALBUMS

Outkast "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below" (LaFace)

The Weakerthans "Reconstruction Site" (Epitaph)

Poison The Well "You Come Before You" (Atlantic)

Joe Strummer and the Mescaleros "Streetcore" (Hellcat)

The Mars Volta "Deloused In The Comatorium" (GSL)

### TOP 10 MOVIES

Paris Hilton

Kill Bill Vol. 1

Lost in Translation

A Mighty Wind

LOTR: Two Towers

Old School

Punch Drunk Love

28 Days Later

Alien (Director's Cut)

Bubba Ho Tep

### TOP 10 VIDEOGAMES

Grand Theft Auto Vice City (PC)

Max Payne 2

Medal of Honor: Breakthrough

Madden 2004

Prince of Persia

Jedi Academy

Socom 2: Navy Seals

True Crime: Streets of LA

Tony Hawk: Underground

Counter-Strike

### TOP 5 LABELS

Epitaph/Hellcat

Sub Pop

Fat Wreck Chords

Jade Tree

Columbia/Sony

### TOP 5 COMEDIANS

George W. Bush

David Cross

SARS

Ted Danson

Genital warts

### TOP 5 MOMENTS

Michael Jacksons dangled kid
- Thomas Maxwell

Thom Cooper interviewing a member of Modern Fix through a bathroom door while he was having anal sex with a female attendee of the Modern Fix BBQ
- Bushman

Jessica Simpson thinking Chicken of the Sea is chicken
- Chino

Deftones Nov 28th at the Orbit Room in Grand Rapids, Michigan
- James Wright

Masturbating to the Star Wars kid
- PR!

Realizing how depressing it is that I'm unable to come up with a moment
- Chris Hnat

I almost had enough facial hair to kind of almost grow a goatee once
- Brian Greenaway

Being with my mommy
- Hunter

Getting super full on Thanksgiving, making myself barf and coming out to see my family with my birthday cake. I had to blow out the candles with puke breath
- Thomas Cooper

**JAMES WRIGHT**

Unloco "Becoming I" (Maverick)
*- A complete, timeless masterpiece album*
Sevendust "Seasons" (TVT)
*- It gets better every time*
Brand New "Deja Entendu" (Razor and Tie)
*- Emotionally honest, a perfect record*
40 Below Summer "The Mourning After" (Razor and Tie)
*- Very multi dimensional and amazing*
E Town Concrete "The Renaissance" (Razor and Tie)
*- New Jersey meets metal and hiphop*

**GUNNAR OM Records**

Outkast "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below" (Le Face)

EMO "This is My Home" (Stereo Deluxe)

Joe Strummer & The Mescaleros "Street Core" (Epitaph)

Kaskade "It's You, It's Me" (OM)

King Kooba & The Trout "Slow Gin Vol 4 Mix" (Independent)

**SHANNON 2Much CoffeeMan**

Ween "Quebec" (Sanctuary)

Innocence Mission "Befriended" (Badman)

Beck "Sea of Change" (Interscope)

Kevin Devine "Make the Clocks Move" (Triple Crown)

Mosquitos "S/T" (Bar None)

**THOMAS MAXWELL**

The Postal Service "Give Up" (Sub Pop)
*- Finally I can die happy*
Death Cab For Cutie "Transatlanticism" (Barsuk)
*- Its a god damn masterpiece*
Iron and Wine "The Creek Drank the Cradle" (Sub Pop)
*- Camp songs to live by*
Elliott Smith "Pretty Ugly Before b/w A Distorted Reality" (Suicide Squeeze)
*- Rest in peace old friend*
The Weakerthans "Reconstruction Site" (Epitaph)
*- What happened to my Pendleton*

**CAMPBELL**

Between the Buried and Me "The Silent Circus" (Victory)
*- Hot chick does loungy rockabilly*
Majority Rule "Emergency Numbers" (Magic Bullet)
*- Melodic metal, very smart words*
Rise Against "Revolutions Per Minute" (Fat Wreck Chords)
*- Catchy punk that's aggressive too*
NOFX "The War on Errorism" (Fat Wreck Chords)
*- Punk, and they discuss GW*
Anti-Flag "The Terror State" (Fat Wreck Chords)
*- Punk, Bush, their best yet*

**MATT "DAD" TORRES**

Thrice "The Artist In The Ambulance" (Island)
*- Great lyrics and killer guitars*
Thursday "War All The Time" (Island)
*- Awesome songwriting and musicianship*
Alkaline Trio "Good Mourning" (Vagrant)
*- More tunes about love and death*
The Weakerthans "Reconstruction Site" (Epitaph)
*- Best band to see live*
Mike Park "For The Love of Music" (Sub City)
*- Good acoustic tracks from Mike*

**MIKE BUSHMAN**

Shadows Fall "The Art of Balance" (Century Media)
*- Flag bearer of American metal*
Sushirobo "The Light Fingered Feeling Of..." (Pattern 25)
*- Went flush with the rush*
Haste "The Mercury Lift" (Century Media)
*- Hardcore indie rock is outstanding*
Scissorfight "Deathchants Breakdowns & Military Waltzes 2" (Tortuga)
*- Rural rock smashing your face*
The Paper Chase "Hide The Kitchen Knives" (Beatville)
*- Ugly beautiful drug trip melody*

**SETH Invisible Youth PR**

Outkast "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below" (Le Face)

Cradle of Filth "Damnation And A Day" (Epic)

Limbeck "Hi, Everything's Great" (Doghouse)

The Weakerthans "Reconstruction Site" (Epitaph)

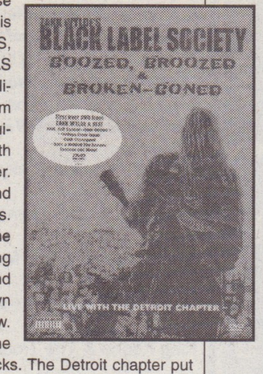
Blink-182 "S/T" (Geffen)

# DVD REVIEWS

## Black Label Society

*"Boozed, Broozed & Broken-Boned" DVD*

**(Spitfire/Eagle Vision)**



Going to a Black Label Society show has gotta be as close as you can come to a Hell's Angels biker rally. This DVD is a collection of videos and live footage of Zakk and BLS, plus some behind the scenes materials from the BLS vaults. There is a wealth of material here and the capabilities of DVD technology have been used to maximum capacity. The video for BLS radio hit 'Stillborn' is here, a guitar lesson from Zakk himself, footage from Tokyo along with a full concert performance featuring the Detroit chapter. You can't deny the power of Zakk and company live and kicking ass rolling through about 12 Black Label classics. The sound of the live show is fucking great and took me back to a time when Alice in Chains "Facelift" was blasting through my speakers. As one would expect from Zakk and company, the solos are flying, the beers are going down smooth and the tunes are loud and motherfucking raw. Zakk sums up the whole DVD during the live show when he says, "Limp Bizkit can suck our big fat motherfucking cocks. The Detroit chapter put a nail in Fred Durst's coffin." Amen brother. Amen.

www.blacklabelsociety.net

**James Wright**

## Eulogy / Alveran

*"2K3 DVD"*

**(Eulogy/ Alveran)**

EULOGY / ALVERAN 2K3 DVD

Some of the best new names in hardcore for sure, but the audio quality is really sub par on the live performances. If you know the tunes, you will be charged to see some of these bands who don't have a lot of material out there yet. Most of the names are relatively new and on their first or second full lengths. So you might not have had a chance to see a band like This Day Forward or Unearth because you live in some little shit town in the middle of nowhere. This will help you out. Some. The quality of the live track that each band is given is shaky at best, and down right inaudible at worst. The makers of this DVD do spice things up a bit by doing little "bios" for each band. Some of their music plays while they show snippets of the bands antics or touring lives. This is the best parts of this DVD as you get some insight in to the band and can actually hear their music. They should have just dubbed the live footage with the recorded material and this would have a better impact. If you are a fan of any of the bands, you will probably forgive the low quality of the live recordings. Highlights include: Bury Your Dead: with some of those crazy fucking hardcore windmill fuckers just going crazy in the pit. Unsung Zeros: "Being on Eulogy keeps us from getting our asses kicked". Unearth: Was recorded somewhere else and got the best shake for live recording on this DVD. They get two songs, which makes up for them not getting any interview footage like the rest of the bands get. What's up with that? Unearth is one of the best bands on here. Evergreen Terrance: "At the Gainesville fest, we pooped in boxes and tossed them out like they were presents." (*Cuts to scene of kid sniffing box and recoiling in disgust). That's pretty funny. They also get two songs. Other bands included are: On Broken Wings, Until The End, Shattered Realm, Where Fear and Weapons Meet and This Day Forward. No extra goodies, just the bands, a live track and a couple of minutes of band "personality" montages. Only get this if you are just foaming for material from these bands and know the songs by heart because the live footage is going to leave you wanting more and the interviews are painfully short.

**Bushman**

## Dio

*"Evil Or Divine"*

**(Spitfire/Eagle Vision)**

DIO
EVIL OR DIVINE

After watching this DVD I felt ashamed that I enjoyed some of today's modern day artists. Ronnie James Dio is nearly three times the age of most of these artists, yet he rocks harder than 90% of them. Dio has been rocking the spot since he did stints with Rainbow and Sabbath in the mid-70's to early 80's. After checking out this DVD I can say that nearly 30 years after his debut this man's voice still sounds fucking perfect. Check out the notes he hits on this when performing 'Stand Up and Shout' or 'Last In Line', his vocals are powerful and carry the songs with devastating effects. The musicianship here is top notch with each member of the band hitting their notes without fault. The drum solo provided by Simon Wright puts most drummers to shame, while guitar solos are fucking brilliant. The performance side of the DVD definitely pulls out all the stops, making me a little pissed off that I missed Dio when he rolled through town last summer. Also contained on the DVD is the hilarious video for 'Push' featuring Jack Black and Tenacious D, an interview with the man himself and some backstage footage. This is truly a great DVD for any fan of the power metal genre or for anyone who's followed Dio's career over the past 25 years.

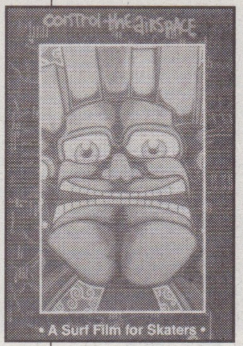
www.ronniejamesdio.com

**James Wright**

## Control the Airspace

*"A Surf Film for Skaters"*

**(Ill Repute Productions)**



The video's subtitle is "A Surf Film for Skaters." Whatever that means. This is probably one of the weakest skate/surf films you'll ever see. It's a hodgepodge of mostly mediocre skate footage, a lame "monkey" skit and surfing. Most of the camera work is okay, but the subject matter couldn't be much less compelling (a couple crusties doing downhill slides like Bones Brigade videos did 18 years ago). The flick includes everything from surfing, snowboard hucking, bowl riding and the occasional impressive flip trick. What makes it worse is that it splices in footage of 9/11 plane crashes and the subsequent fires in the World Trade Center towers. Is there a point to this? I assume the video footage was a precursor to the film's only political message: a shot of "Terrorism Must Be Stopped" written on a surfboard. There's some decent pool riding - plenty of longboarders doing 50-50s, carves and such - but it's nothing you can't see at your local skatepark from some similar better than average skaters. It's all amateur footage save for a few seconds of clips from Andy MacDonald skating a YMCA camp ramp. But the Mac footage isn't anything you can't see elsewhere, like an X-Games repeat. The biggest offense: downhill race coverage. How depressing. Pass the St. John's Wort, please.

www.illreputeproductions.com

**Jeff Skruck**

## Kettle Cadaver

*"A Taste of Blood"*

**(Horror Rock)**

KETTLE CADAVER
A Taste of Blood

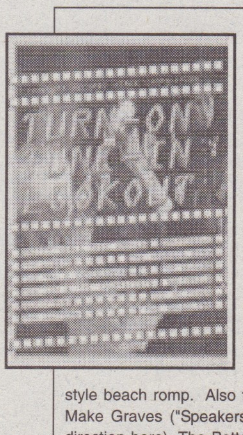
This is some legitimately sick shit. Brutal and bloody piercings, stabbings, pokings, cuttings and other various forms of self-mutilation are the fuel for the nightmare that is Kettle Cadaver. Making Marilyn Manson look like a Saturday morning cartoon, this is shock rock, heavy on the impalings. How many self-imposed piercings can you sit through? How about repeated staples being, ah, stapled into singer Edwin Borsheim. And I'm talking those industrial construction worker staplers, not those pussy staplers that bend in the middle that used to sit upon your teachers desk. Not extreme enough? Then how about the sequence when he pounds numerous nails into his testicles? Now there's a real man. The music itself is sub-quality recordings of sub-par gloomy Goth rock. Subject matter is obviously death and gore and whatever else "shocking" that can be put together. This whole thing is like Jackass meets Marilyn Manson (if Marilyn Manson was actually scary). Most of the live footage is from backwoods shows for a couple of dozen people, making the whole thing that much more bizarre and somehow... sorta credible. Since this isn't a spectacle they are being paid well for, this is all a very disturbed choice of lifestyle filtered through a mediocre hard rock band. The visuals are disgustingly interesting enough to give Kettle Cadaver a viewing if you like that GG Allen type shit. Although there isn't much to this DVD, what you do get will leave you feeling wrong.

**Bushman**

## Lookout! Records Video Compilation

*"Turn-on, Tune-in, Lookout"*

**(Lookout!)**



If you're looking for the newest of the new from Lookout! then keep looking because "Turn-on" is made up almost exclusively of really, really old videos from the good ol' days of VHS. Still, it's fun to watch old Mr. T. Experience videos ("I Fell For You", "Ba Ba Ba Ba" and "And I Will Be With You") no matter how low budget they may be. The Donnas also contribute three videos, two of which are forgettable, hackneyed attempts at re-constructing a rocking live show, the third of which, "Do You Wanna Hit It?", is a Flash-influenced cartoon that will induce "Donnie Darko" flashbacks. The Queers also serve up a few offerings from days gone by as they harmonize their way through "Don't Back Down" and "Punk Rock Girls", the former replete with a Gidget-style beach romp. Also featured on "Turn-on" are selected tracks from Pretty Girls Make Graves ("Speakers Push the Air"-undisputedly the strongest production and direction here), The Pattern, Squirtgun, The Smugglers, Servotron, Bratmobile, The Oranges, The Hi-Fives, and everyone's favorite gay band, Pansy Division. Pansy Division's videos demand to be seen if for no other reason than the lead singer's heinous mullet and the dancing stuffed animals in "Bad Boyfriend" the best-of-the-worst video I've ever seen. In all, twenty-one videos that certainly won't blow your hair back but even if they do it'll still look better than that poor bastard from Pansy Division.

www.lookoutrecords.com

**Brian Greenaway**

## Meat Puppets

*"Alive in the Nineties"*

**(MVD)**

MEAT PUPPETS
alive in the nineties

This is a tight DVD showcasing various the live musical prowesses that was the Meat Puppets. Rather than hit you with one live show, you get a few songs from 6 different shows covering the span of the 90's. You get the obvious hits "Backwater" and "Lake of Fire" (the former being so memorably covered by Nirvana), but the Meat Puppets have a pretty lengthy catalog that stretches back to the very early 80's so you get dosed with little nuggets that span their career (like, "Plateau" from their '83 release "Meat Puppets II" and "Automatic Mojo" from their '87 release "Huevos"). The opener is "Attacked by Monsters" from the '89 release "Monsters". Included is plenty of bonus footage, which is really what makes DVDs as cool as they are. Amongst other meaty treats, you get: A Curt Kirkwood interview. Drummer Derrick Bonstom's Anecdotes. Mike Watt, Flea and Chris Kirkwood sitting around talking "bass" - which was rather cool. And if that wasn't enough Mike Watt, some more Mike Watt and Thurston Moore singing the praises of all that is the Meat Puppets. Solid production, easy menus and lots of goodies. A must own for any Meat Puppets fan.

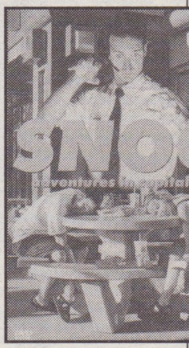
www.musicvideodistributors.com

**Bushman**

## Snog

*"Adventures in Capitalism"*

**(Metropolis)**



DJ David Thrussell first brought wide recognition to his Snog project with the 1992 club hit "Corporate Slave". That is the last of a baker's dozen of videos on this compilation. Thrussell's voice becomes the most Stan Ridgway-like on "Fill My Hole" which closes out the first trio of videos. These all have a Chuck Close-like fetishistic focus on the mouth-portion of a human face. Perhaps an allegory for the consumption of consumerism, this approach yields John Waters-like shock value in the close-ups of sloppy tooth brushing ("Late 20th Century Boy", "Empires") and chicken eating ("The Human Germ"). This mirrors the level of critical detail Thrussell has for modernity, which reaches a feverish pitch recalling Emergency Broadcast Network (EBN) on "Born to be Mild". These videos are all obsessively edited and feature rich allowing more to be discovered on repeated viewings. A handful of interviews reveal Thrussell's anti-corporate philosophy as well as the fact that America's freedom of speech laws gave life to the Snog "Relax Into the Abyss", which was effectively quashed in Thrussell's less conducive Australia. Tracks found here off that album are "Are You Normal Enough?" and "Real Estate Man". The slogan-based attacks on consumerist culture and the post-psychedelic image collages are like a cross between Survival Research Laboratory's phrase assaults and the neo-hippie look of a late-period Psychic TV lightshow. It is video artist Richard Grant that works with Thrussell's sounds to make these pieces and he deserves at least as much credit as Thrussell for the final success. However, the duo seems to be unable to move out of this formula of densely constructed moving collages and socially aware content for any of the tracks. The Thrussell's refreshing and witty radicalism aside, this DVD is good electronica for the headspace or the dance floor, even if you say to yourself with apologies to Papa John: "The message may not move me or mean a great deal to me/But hey! It feels so groovy to say…"

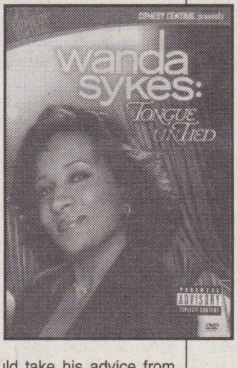
www.worldwentdown.com/imcc

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**

## Wanda Sykes

*"Tongue Untied"*

**(Comedy Central)**



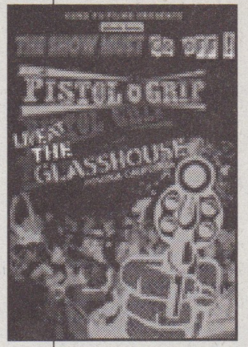
Everyone realizes that our country is in the toilet. We are all having a pool party with G.W. acting as lifeguard. Wanda Sykes is in the same pool, but she is tired of swimming. I wasn't expecting all the political commentary, but Sykes ideas on the state of our nation were just as good as Michael Moore's. From Bush's villainous chuckle to his fridge-worthy colorings, Sykes throws more than just humor at G.W. Just about every comic on television has at least one funny joke, but not many actually dig into the issues that are current. If they do dig in, nothing is really relevant. Sykes shows that she does her research and knows what is going on. From Cheney to Ashcroft to Rice to the EPA to New Jersey, no one in Washington is safe. Sykes is not all about government though. She throws in some lower humor that everyone can enjoy. Her impression of what the "pope" should have said the little-boy-groping Catholic priests is dead-on. If only the "pope" could take his advice from Sykes. If only Bush could take his advice from Sykes. If only all of us could take our advice from Sykes. There has never been a black president and there has never been a female president. I say next year we flip the boat over and elect one in the same. Start your campaign today Sykes, I'm behind you.

**Pete Soyer**

## Pistol Grip

*"Live at the Glasshouse"*

**(Kung Fu Films)**



What are you doing tonight? Wanna go see a show? Sure you do. Nobody's playing at the VFW? No? High school gym? Nobody? Brett's house? Shit. Well, we'll just have to sit back and watch Kung Fu's latest in the "Show Must Go Off!" series-Pistol Grip playing a record release in beautiful Pomona, California. OK, so Pomona is one of those places where if the engine falls out of your car and your hair is on fire you just keep driving until you get someplace better, but that's beside the point. This installment of the series boasts a tremendous eighteen-track collection, the majority of which come from "Another Round", and the majority of which rock. My favorite song is "Marshburn Ave.", with its harrowing guitar riffs and slightly slowed tempo. Don't look for much in the way of down-tempo stuff here though, as Pistol Grip batters their way through the set, working the crowd into an absolute frenzy during such hits as, "Broken Radio", "A Murder of Crows" and their cover of "Viva la Revolution". The camera work here is excellent as the cameras capture all of action onstage as well as the building excitement within the crowd between each track. Plus, the band commentary is full of funny stuff, ranging from each others' questionable choice in t-shirts to the quality of life in Pomona. Or we could go to Brett's. I heard his parents are out of town. Hella.

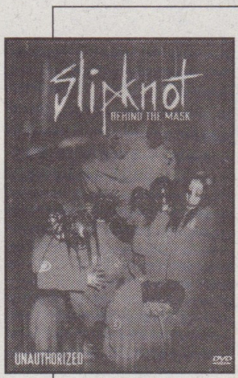
www.pistolgrip.net.

**Brian Greenaway**

## Slipknot

*"Behind the Mask"*

**(Trinity Home Entertainment)**



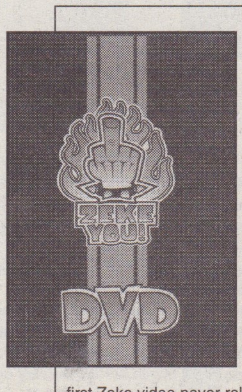
Here's a good tip for you DVD buying crowd. Whenever a music DVD says "Unauthorized" on it's cover, just replace that word with "This is shit" and you will save yourself some time, money and frustration. I knew this was gonna be a waste of time when the opening screen had a disclaimer stating: "This documentary contains no music or performances by Slipknot". But this is seriously the worst piece of shit DVD ever made. These people should be sued for claiming this has ANYTHING to do with Slipknot. This is the most incoherent, rambling and totally meaningless DVD put together I've ever seen. But just to prove I actually sat through this stink bomb, this is what you do get: Lots of still frame live pics of Slipknot mixed in with: Some pictures of Iowa. Some skanky chick doing a semi-strip tease. Footage from those kids in LA who drove around shooting people with paintballs. (And btw, they try to portray that as happening in Des Moines when it actually happened somewhere else entirely. Just shows how much of a sham this truly is since they use multiple cut scenes of this footage since they didn't have any actual Slipknot footage in the Slipknot DVD). Some guy putting out a small flaming torch in his pants. Some kick boxing footage. A visual countdown from 8 to 0 shown about 35 times. Some fans ranting outside a signing. Some no-name local Des Moines idiots talking about their first encounters with Slipknot (like we care). Some dumb "reporter" type priss trying to offer some sort of psychoanalysis about Slipknot and missing the boat completely (but she's acting - badly - so it's just more tripe this DVD tries to sell you). Some retarded announcer and his goth chick fighting most lamely in an alley with swords. An in-depth piece on piercing and tattooing. An "announcer" you want to beat up for being so stupid by the end of this. And just a bunch of really lame, slapped together footage that has nothing to do with Slipknot. DON'T BUY THIS.

**Bushman**

## Zeke

*"Zeke You"*

**(Dead Teenager)**



The crystal meth equivalent to punk rock waving the flag of rock and roll. It's fast and sweaty and loud. It's Zeke. Now on DVD! Lots of semi-interesting "on the road" type video documentary of the band that is Zeke mixed in with a bunch semi-audible live footage of varying quality (if you know the train wreck that is a Zeke song, you would easily recognize the logistic presented for any kind of camera to accurately pick up that level of punk rock noise). You get a ton of songs though, because Zeke songs tear through you at about 130 mph and are generally finished within one or two of the barking choruses. And then there are the fast songs. Zeke even puts a little apology at the end for the unaltered sound, but maintains that it allows "for the spirit of Zeke to remain true". And DVDs need extra goodies. You get: The first Zeke video never released to the public for "Highway Star". A couple of "videos" which are basically a collage of live shots, not synched in any way, to their songs "Twisted" and "Let's Get Drugs". And a little mini-documentary and live footage of their day at Seattle's "Pain in the Grass" festival. The whole thing is a bit raw and minimal, with a "take what we give you and like it" attitude... but hey, that's pretty fitting for the Zeke brand of musical carnage.

www.deadteenagerrecords.com

**Bushman**

## Avenged Sevenfold

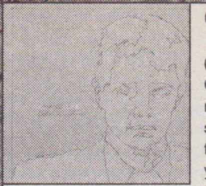
***"Waking The Fallen"***

**(HOPELESS)**

Isn't it hilarious how quickly scenesters are striving to replace AFI's "vacated spot" as gothic punks extraordinaire? They've gone so far as to claim that otherwise-ignored Avenged Sevenfold are heirs to their underground PVC-laden throne. Uh, last time I checked (which would be right about now, thank you), Avenged Sevenfold are more screamo than East Bay Melodic Hardcore. That said, this album is quite intense when tracks pick up a Converge-meets-Grade bombast that is otherwise bludgeoned by bouts of introspective, melodic wankery. It's like hearing MxPx having relations with Moneen. What a frustrating line: you either want to rip shit up as if you're givin'er to Voorhees, or you want to beat these mascara-sportin' clowns up for having the unappealing staccato genre-bending of Glasseater. Eloquent and packed with stellar harmonies yet entirely too "encompassing", this album probably will sit well next to "Black Sails" but only because disenfranchised Gothic punx need it to fill a void!

www.avengedsevenfold.com

**Keith Carman**



## Cool Hand Luke

***"Wake Up, O Sleeper"***

**(FLOODGATE)**

Cool Hand Luke is one of those mid-sized bands that have been sort of lost in the shuffle ever since their inception. In the past few years their following has continued to increase and the band has also taken on the challenge of being a Christian band. As a matter of fact, the new album has numerous spiritual overtones from the very beginning. The first track, "Heroes Will Be Heroes" melodically boasts "Hey, little boy, bury your sword, Jesus already won this war". Later the Christian affinity continues on "So Shall It Be" with the lines "Stand and lift your heads, redemption is drawing near, the armies to heaven, are riding in the air" (and trust me, these are not the only examples). It's always interesting to hear a melodic punk band with a singer who is also the drummer. I don't understand how Mark Nicks carries his notes for so long while playing the drums, but what do I know about playing drums. In many ways "Wake Up, O Sleeper" sounds like Clarity era Jimmy Eat World, but could also be mistaken for Juliana Theory. This is by far Cool Hand Luke's most mature effort to date and I would expect the band and their following to continue to flourish.

www.coohandluke.net

**Tom**

Big Baby Satan

## Big Baby Satan

***"Untitled"***

**(BBS MUSIC)**

At first this album comes across as a wretchedly dull, unbelievably lo-fi, stoner metal band. Once the ears adjust to the production, rendering it non-distracting, it's clear that this is indeed within the stoner metal camp, albeit gifted with a certain something extra. The extra comes from a guitar player who is undoubtedly familiar with classic aggressive metal and hardcore. There's an anger in this guy's playing beyond the anger of running a little low on pot. The vocals are competent; they remind me of stoner metal vocals ala Fu Manchu mixed with a seething punk undercurrent that never quite breaks the surface. When the band picks up the tempo the production again becomes a problem forcing the ears to constantly adjust to the poor drum sounds (although the production is far, far superior to Metallica's "St. Anger"). To say you've heard all this before would be an understatement, however, based on the overall feel of the album, the band doesn't take themselves all that seriously. Sometimes this can be a shortcoming; for these guys it's not. It's important to remember rock and roll is supposed to be fun. That gets forgotten a lot lately.

www.bigbabysatan.com

**DICK**

ELECTRIC SIX

## Electric Six

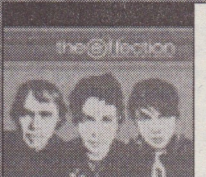
***"Danger! High Voltage***

**(XL)**

The first fun filled single from those disco influenced pranksters Electric Six. Judging by the reviews I've read these guys are really trying to do something new and fun which is a welcomed change from the seriousness of modern rock. These guys are only a couple steps right from that cinder block to the head mother fucker Andrew WK. Although Electric Six is not partying hard there is "Danger! High Voltage". This jam belongs in a dance club with purple shirts, huge open collars and chest hair fully exposed (yeah, it's that disco). I believe the new buzz word is electroclash, but Spinal Tap and Tenacious D would both approve of rhyming "Taco Bell" with "Gates of Hell" while wearing a bright turquoise suit and huge pilot sunglasses. So much fun I want some more.

www.xlrecordings.com

**Tom**



## The Effection

***"Soundtrack To A Moment"***

**(ADELINE)**

For a long time I often wondered what separates the pop from power-pop. I've always thought that pop was just the short form of popular, but when it comes to post-post-punk the idea of power-pop in light of the Avril Lavines of the world is damn near laughable. Is Avril power-pop? I'm not really sure, but you should hear Ben Gibbard of Death Cab For Cutie and the Postal Service cover "Complicated". I agree with Ben that I don't really understand what is so fucking complicated. I think what makes a band power-pop is the fact that they can not be trudging or depressing and must always make you want to either get up and dance or get up and break shit or light things on fire. Probably the less drastic is the danceable, highly skilled versatile rock act like The Effection. I mean, you could hear some songs such as "March" on a bouncier rockabilly album and still other songs such as "Agony", "Soundtrack To A Moment", or "The Sound Effection" on a real British Madness influenced dance album that is fully aware of Operation Ivy or other essential bay area acts. Adeline once again helps put the bay back on the map.

www.adelinerecords.net

**Tom**

## Jared Grabb/The Lesser Birds of Paradise

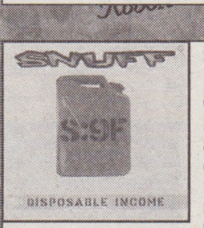
***"Reading Light"***

**(THINKER THOUGHT)**

The first act on this four song split, Jared Grabb, is an acoustic driven contemporary of the early recordings of Dashboard Confessional. When a band can rely heavily on open chord acoustic guitars and somehow manage to keep things interesting it's a rarity. Jared's tracks are not earth-shattering; however, they are humble and well written. I think it would help if all the vocals were in tune with the guitar and each other (they went a little flat sometimes). Frankly, I liked Dashboard Confessionals like this and I hate the new shit. This guy better stick to his guns and keep making camp songs. The Lesser Birds of Paradise sound like a very young Smoking Popes. It's the pop drums with the rock guitars and effortless vocals that come out strong and deep despite the lack of enthusiasm. There is certainly an audience for both these acts.

www.thinkerthoughtwrong.com

**Tom**



## Snuff

***"Disposable Income"***

**(UNION 2112)**

I lost track of Snuff a few years ago, after they released "Nick Northern" on that old Fat Wreck sampler. Remember that thing? What the hell happened to these guys between then and now? They're still good, playing the same sort of music, fast and clean with a decidedly heavy feel. Despite the swirling chords and fantastically quick drumming, Duncan's vocals remain as controlled and methodic as ever, very similar to those of Bad Religion's Greg Graffin. "Angels 1-5" kicks the album off with a thick bluesy riff that eventually gives way to three minutes of pop-punk pleasantness that really typifies what Snuff is all about. The barrage of power chords and pounding beats are interwoven with Duncan's almost digitally enhanced vocals, creating a nice juxtaposition of sounds. While neither Duncan's sentiments nor his delivery are entirely worthy of the earlier Graffin comparison (what the hell was I thinking?) they are vaguely political enough to pass as anti-war, which is good. So Snuff's back from wherever they disappeared to, and I think we should all throw a party. With a piñata. And those little hats. Love those.

www.snuff.net

**Brian Greenaway**

One night in Bangkok

## Sodom

***"One Night in Bangkok"***

**(SPV)**

Sodom releases their third live album, "Mortal Way of Live" and "Marooned" being the two predecessors, and this one is a double CD doozy containing twenty-four songs that span their lengthy career (over 20 years!). This album comes out fast on the heels of fellow Teutonic thrashers, Kreator's, double live CD, and like that one, Sodom delivers the grand visceral goods. The sound is raw, but the production exceptional. Live album production is getting damn good lately. This one seems to be done without the aid of overdubs or any of that bullshit. The guitar sound is strong and bass and drums pummeling. You won't be let down. The band play their songs with a near drunken enthusiasm that causes the songs to nearly careen out of control, loosen up, topple onto their sides and then, just in the nick of time, right themselves, bolt straight up and take off full-bore, tight and grinding. This is a must have for fans of Sodom (I know there's a bunch of you) and for me it's a delightful comapanion piece to Kreator's double live release. Listeners get a chance to hear two of the great-granddaddies of German thrash in all their fierce lively glory, just as they were meant to be heard. Now, if Destruction could slip a double live one under my door I'd be all set. Also contains a live video for "Among the Weirdcong."

**DICK**

### 1905

*"Voice"*

**(Exotic Fever)**

When was the last time you heard a band whose sound encapsulated death metal, folk rock and everything in between. I bet it leaves most fans perplexed that the teacher from Beavis and Butthead and the singer of Cattle Decapitation could be into the same band. This band's message is all about liberation and freedom for the world and I think 1905 would favor a 2003 anarchy movement. In fact, the name is somehow linked to the world wars in a way I bet the band thinks is pretty earth-shattering, but I couldn't figure that shit out (too much poetry, not enough substance). The more notable tracks feature singer and piano player Jess who sound very much like the vocalist of Belle & Sebastian, but this chick can scream too. There are also a couple of the instrumental tracks on this disc which are reminiscent of Metallica on their few and far between acoustic interludes. 1905's dynamic use of both male and female vocals with the screaming, singing, whispering, etc. is what makes them most impressive. Look for the stars.

www.exoticfever.com

**Tom**

### We Talked About Murder

*"Expecting The Explosion"*

**(Has Anyone Ever Told You?)**

You pansies, don't just talk about that shit, make it happen (the murder that is). These kids are another Austin, Texas based outfit with a fairly "a" typical rock sound. Their method of assault is likened unto early (very early) Seaweed, but also carries a Jawbox type quality. The first thing I noticed about We Talked About Murder is that the lyrics are often out of key, but it's still unclear if this is intended or if their singer Rick Gonzalez just lacks the range. Whatever it is, I would highly recommend some singing lessons. There are some noticeably good breakdowns in songs like Kiddie Pool Conversations (a 7 plus minute juggernaut) and Beta Valentine to keep the listener interested. The use of atmospheric distortion is a nice touch, but in terms of technique and ability this group could use a few more years of experience to tighten their sound. It almost sounds like the band tried to record this album in one take because the drums and guitars sound a little off sometimes. Austin is the right place for this band to find their sound.

www.hasanyoneevertoldyou.com

**Tom**

STRYCHNINE

### Strychnine

*"Oakland Stadtmusikanten: Live in Bremen, Germany"*

**(TKO)**

First of all, what the hell is that word after "Oakland"? A shiny new donkey to whoever can pronounce it. Second of all, how the hell does trashy, gutter punk bank from Oakland end up playing in Bremen at some venue that nobody can pronounce? Well, anyway, Strychnine is captured here doing their standard live show, blitzkrieging their way through a set consisting of such classic cuts as "Strychnine", "Sounds of Seduction", and "Idiot for You". The blue-collar ethos and "music by brute-strength" tumult reign supreme amongst the beer drenched Germans, as Strychnine's twenty tracks punk and roll their way through hits and misses with no regard for harmony or even good taste. The recording quality is surprisingly good (Germans aren't totally inept) and the banter between the hooligans onstage is almost worth the price of admission alone. Almost. It's screamed, it's raw, it sounds like hell. It's punk. In Germany. By a band from the East Bay. You figure it out.

www.tkorecords.com

**Brian Greenaway**

### Sterling

*"Self-Title"*

**(File 13)**

What's the deal with these amazing creative instrumental rock bands? If you are a fan of Godspeed! You Black Emperor, Ghosts and Vodka, Pele, Joan of Arc, Mono or any other spastic inventive instrumental band you will enjoy this album, I guarantee. Sterling is moody and uninhibited avant-rock with obvious metal influences in the heroic ripping guitars and challenging drums, but is soft and reserved with their use of clear precise guitar solos and piano. Some of the build-ups are the classic climactic marathons we have come to expect from purely instrumental bands, but when musical themes fade in and out it's like completing a phrase for Sterling. Your brain becomes mush in their cluster-fuck of ideas and atmospheric themes. This particular type of sound is very characteristic of Godspeed! in their dark orchestral quality and sound. It's easy to picture a movie's murder or fight scene occurring during one of these songs. File 13 has found a winner.

www.file-13.com

**Tom**

### West Gate

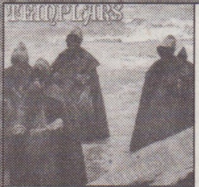
*"Rise and Fall"*

**(Self-Released)**

The singer of this hardcore entourage is a crazy fuck...I mean a sick, glass eating type. Literally, not only does the music contain the capacity to rupture all vital organs in your chest cavity, but I know first hand the passion pent up inside this local Philly cat's cranium. With the grimy gutter life of Philly surrounding you it's no wonder this EP's got enough aggression to get gorillas fucking S&M style. The range covered by these musicians is admirable yet perplexing to categorize (for you readers who require parallels to everything so you won't ever buy something new) due to its vastly varying compositions. A little fuck you let's dance punk, then a fierce switch to hard core with a slow down to some ill emo style screaming and whaling only further entices you into the West Gate reality. They've got a great positive east coast fuck you attitude so go buy their fucking album or you'll get a forearm to the dome, bitch.

www.westgatepa.com

**Farr**



### Templars

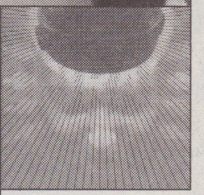
*"Phase 2"*

**(GMM)**

I remember seeing Templars patches on people's jackets at some street punk shows back in the day, but until now I've never had the pleasure of hearing them. I have a friend named Nick who does old school skate tricks (like hand plants and manual board manipulations) and likes old school street punk. I'm not talking about the anarchical play as hard and as fast as we can types of jams, but more the low-fi types of bands you might see at a pub. My buddy Nick would really enjoy this band. I guess these guys have a pretty decent following in Europe and most of the free world, but don't have a particularly strong following in the States. Despite, their simple formula of straight-up power chord driven 1-2, 1-2 street punk is a throwback. After listening to Templars I need some "Badtown".

www.thetemplars.com

**Tom**



### Blood Has Been Shed

*"Spirals"*

**(Ferret Music)**

If this band did the soundtrack for "The Wizard of Oz" the classic saying would be changed to "follow the double-bass road." Breakdowns, riffage, nicely done screaming, blast beats, great timing patterns, and songs that aren't too long make "Spirals" a great thing to listen to. By the time you contemplate how cool one thing was, Blood Has Been Shed slaps you with a windmill to the face. Starting songs off with riffs that are so fast and aggressive that you feel like getting up and moving around will always be a good idea in my book. I just wish I could have been in a band like this.

www.ferretstyle.com

**Campbell**

HOT NEW SPIRITS
TANGIERS

### Tangiers

*"Hot New Spirits"*

**(Sonic Unyon)**

It's crazy that in wonderful countries like Canada they support the arts and help bands put out rock records. If only America could learn from Canada's example and support music other than classical symphony orchestras, but we're a bunch of prude conservatives. Fucking politicians, don't get me started on how they've royally fucked up this country. The Tangiers are a new-wave rock group that sound like a continuation of the Rolling Stones or Aerosmith in their rock-n-roll or as I like to say "bar punk" days. You know, before Steven Tyler and Mick Jagger got Botox. The Tangiers are nothing too fancy and definitely fall within the "easy listening" realm of rock music and are awfully unmemorable. The best track on this thirteen song record is the last one "Situation" because of the sheer rawk, but it's definitely too little too late. Most of the album suffers from lack of distortion and their often early Beatles type of country sound that you can get at just about any bar that has line dancing on Fridays and Saturdays is just not doing it for me. I picture these guys in black suits with skinny ties pretending they fit in at a rock-a-billy convention.

www.sonicunyon.com

**Tom**

the masses
and
learn

### Verbal Assault

*"Verbal Assault: The Masses and Learn"*

**(Mendit)**

Nobody knows who Verbal Assault was. Nobody, I don't care how hardcore you are, knows any of the songs on this record or where these guys come from or how hard they rock. Verbal Assault were around in the mid-80s, when hardcore was underground like those monsters from "Tremors". Mendit has taken it upon themselves to re-release two of their earlier efforts, "The Masses" and "Learn" to a world two decades removed from the Rhode Island skate-rock scene that spawned them. And it still sounds good. The first ten tracks comprise "The Masses" and illuminate the same roots that are found within Minor Threat, Agnostic Front and 7 Seconds. Blaring through each of the tracks with reckless abandon, Verbal Assault showcase raw power and not much else. It's not until "Learn" that we really understand why Mendit decided to reissue the album. "Learn" shows a better understanding of both song structure and an attention to detail that sets it apart from their earlier work. Still though, why should you care? Because of the raw vibrancy of the music itself. The unabashed DIY ethos and simmering urgency within each machinegun power chord is exactly what's lacking in today's scene obsessed train wreck.

www.verbalassault.com

**Brian Greenaway**

BOYSNIGHTOUT

## Boys Night Out

*"Make Yourself Sick"*

**(FERRET)**

I think everyone will agree, the last thing we need is another emo/hardcore group because the scene is already way too crowded as it is. It's getting to the point now where every day I hear of another band that merges melodic emotional vocals with pop sensibilities and the aggression of hardcore. Joining the list is Canada's very own Boys Night Out, Ferret Records' answer to Taking Back Sunday. While I didn't want to hear another emo band any more than you did, these guys are pretty good. Tracks like "I Got Punched In The Nose" showcases Boys Night Out's ability to try keep things fresh and original with an infectious singalong in mid-song too good to be denied. For some reason I got that same feeling in the pit of my stomach when I first heard this the same way I felt when I first heard Taking Back Sunday mere weeks after the album release. I came in with my own set of bias before I even heard these guys, but please don't because these guys deserve to be heard. There's something about this CD that has their songs playing in my head even when I'm at work. Goddamn them.

www.boysnightout.com

**James Wright**

## Ester Drang

*"Infinite Keys"*

**(JADE TREE)**

It's so difficult to write about bands that you have been following for quite some time. ester drang was quite possibly my favorite new band that came out in 1999 or 2000 with their first release "that is when he turns us golden" (burnt toast). "golden" was a testament to the grunge rock sound that was epitomized by Smashing Pumpkins, however, I thought the album was the best damn album around and was the party album of the summer. Then their second album "Goldenwest" (red crown record empire) blew me away with the move to atmosphere in rock and really changed the way I envisioned a true American indie rock band (keys, guitars, heart on sleve brilliance). This being their third album, the band has grown into something quite magical. For those of you still listening and willing to follow me home, "Infinite Keys" is their metaphorical "On A Wire" (The Get Up Kid's most recent album). I say this because although you would be able to tell this is the same band as on "golden" or "Goldenwest", they have taken a new lease on life with "infinite keys". It's as if Radiohead's rock has been thrown in the pot with Sigur Ros' musical vision and sound. The symphony of music and emotions is what makes ester drang's "infinite keys" so damn amazing. Once more, I saw ester drang on their last tour with Pedro the Lion and let's just say they sold a hell of a lot of records that night. Take me to your leader; my mind has been blown to bits.

www.jadetree.com

**Tom**

## The Album Leaf / On!Air!Library!

*"Lifetime or More"*

**(ARENA ROCK)**

This split EP offers three songs each from The Album Leaf and On!Air!Library!. Each band is understated, moody and ethereal. The Album Leaf comes to us as the side project of Jimmy LaValle (Tristeza). The Album Leaf offers music that is big on structure. The foundation rhythms are from electronic music with the simple, repeated melodies sophisticated and heading toward classical music sounds. On!Air!Library! is more ragged and organic. Layered voices of identical twin sisters Alley and Claudia Deheza with Phillip Wann offer a point of focus in this diffuse, dream-like music.

www.thearenarockrecordingco.com

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**

THE FINE ART OF SELF DESTRUCTION

## Jesse Malin

*"The Fine Art of Self Destruction"*

**(ARTEMIS)**

The story goes that the prolific Ryan Adams was so impressed when he heard Jesse Malin's new countrified songs that he offered to produce them -- even though he'd never been a producer before -- and six days later they had an album. Both figuratively and literally, Adams put his name on the disc. His producing credit is also prominently displayed in a bold font size (I'd say about a 19-point) on the back cover. Go look through your albums. Ten bucks says most, if not all producers are noted in a humble manner. Sure, this was probably the record company's idea to use the "Adams" brand to sell records, but I suspect it's because he's an egomaniac; a guy with a big head who lent his mediocre talent -- Whiskeytown aside -- to a friend. Malin isn't blame-free. Hell, he wrote the mostly banal songs. The mainstream media's comparisons to Springsteen and Paul Westerberg are far-fetched. Malin, former leader of '90s glam rockers D Generation, mostly strums his acoustic throughout this roots rock affair, singing about cigarettes and women. He's reminiscent of Jay Farrar, especially on the opening track "Queen of the Underworld," which along with the bouncy rocker "Wendy," are the best he's got to offer. The ballad "Solitaire" is just plain painful when he growls off-key, "I don't need any-waaaah-un."

www.jessemalin.com

**Jeff Skruck**

THE BRUCES
The War of the Bruces

## The Bruces

*"The War of the Bruces"*

**(MISRA)**

Country influenced indie rock has never sounded so fucking good. This album "The War of the Bruces" single handedly sums up the best parts of the alt. country movement and has me wishing I was born a rhine-stone cowboy home fed on pure Americana. Alex McManus, essentially the Bruces because he plays every instrument, is a major contributing member of Lambchop (who is pure and simply epic), Vic Chesnutt and Empire State. After opening for Bright Eyes on their last major tour The Bruces have already started to take over the world with their organic music. In fact, members of Bright Eyes played with Alex he played in Bright Eyes on the last tour. I've heard that Conor Oberst is one of The Bruces biggest fans. The Bruces like John Vanderslice, Beck, Richard Buckner, Lambchop and the like are willing to dabble in all different types of instruments and musical influences which creates one diverse album that is both memorable and essential. As a connoisseur of music I think you'd be insane not to pick this one up if you haven't already. The miasma just got bigger!

www.misrarecords.com

**Tom**

## Loop Guru

*"Bathtime with Loop Guru"*

**(HYPNOTIC)**

This is the first CD of new material in five years from electronica veterans Loop Guru. As the title suggests, this is a relaxing album of slow-groove beats that would enhance a relaxing soak in the tub. This serene feeling is enhanced by the tranquil sound of horns performing understated and simple melodies answered by synthesizer. As such, this album marks a conclusion of a trilogy ambient atmospherica from the group. The album is also exotica, incorporating ethnic themes, especially the eastern and Asian Indian. The sum total is a warm and bubbling medium of trance electronica to soak the troubled mind and carry way the stresses of the day.

www.HypnoticRecordings.com

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**

HEAVY TREVY

## Heavy Trevy

*"Just a Taste"*

**(SELF-RELEASED)**

What started with really low expectations promptly grew into affection. This pink, smiling disc landed on my lap, literally, from a shitty old-school Maxima next to me in traffic. These things don't happen everyday, so it was definitely worth checking out. After the bitter yet cathartic opening line, "Goodbye and fuck you," in the first track "Later," it's clear where the song and Trevy's general demeanor is going. The obscenities don't subside, but instead snowball into a slew of verbal abuse towards a slutty ex. After getting some of the rage out, the rest of Trevy's stuff proved less acrid, but still full of attitude--in a good way. The solid punk rock beat keeps the stoke up, the body moving, and the mind fresh with anticipation for the full-length release. I guess traffic jams aren't a total loss, but we'll see what route these guys end up taking.

www.heavytrevy.com

**Melanie**

## Ursa Minor

*"Silent Moving Picture"*

**(SMELLS LIKE)**

Sort of a middle of the road folk album that is just so chill. Where the lyrics and pianos scream folk music the bass and drums casually remind you of your favorite smooth jazz station. I can fall asleep in like two minutes while listening to Ursa Minor (which is no small feat). However, where the album sort of drags on a little (for those less affectionate listeners) it easily makes up for it with strong vocals and the use of intricate jazz chords. Lead singer Michelle Casillas also plays the Rhodes and piano on this album. I'm realizing more and more that when a band's lead singer also plays the keys something magical happens. I think it just opens the music up to being more diverse and that the musicians have more options while writing the songs. Not a bad collection of songs.

www.smellslikerecords.com

**Tom**

## Lisa Geramno

*"Lullaby For Liquid Pig"*

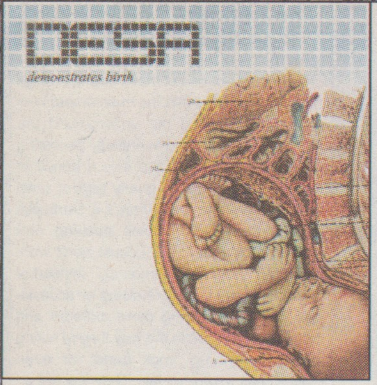
**(INEFFABLE)**

Lisa Geramno returns with a delightful album about depression and alcoholism. This is sure to put a smile on just about anyone's face. The slow-core trudging pop of "Candy" puts a hop in your step with lines like "Too bad it's still raining inside, Alcohol" and "Too bad I forgot what I's thinking, Alcohol". Other notable tracks include the twangy country ballad "It's Party Time" that includes lines such as ""I want to be, $9.99, a pretty good wine." and "I smell like wine, most of the time". It's funny but I keep day-dreaming about playing this album out of an ice cream truck in front of an AA meeting and making a serious profit on the whole ordeal. Truthfully, this is a dreadfully honest album about someone in the grips of depression with no hope of reprieve. I like it.

www.imusic.com

**Tom**

Robots are pretending they know you



## Desa

*"Demonstrates Birth"*

**(Substandard)**

I was looking at the cover of this album which is an anatomical profile of a pregnant woman and I got thinkin'. I just don't agree with all this miracle of birth b.s. That thing looks like a little parasitic alien sittin' in there. Curled up in hibernation ready to spring a lifetime of bills on your ass. "Demonstrating Birth", much like pregnancy, was a hard thing for me to get through. This is a four song preview from Desa's upcoming album, that consists of generic pop/punk tunes. I feel like I've heard this album already, like twenty times. The main variable on "Demonstrates Birth" is its switch from pop rock to metal at moments that won't catch you off guard. Lyrically, this may be more painful than anything I've ever gone through. Song one starts "Sleeping tight, contented sugerplums danced." Contented fuckin' sugerplums! What the shit! Don't have a kid, and don't listen to this.

www.desadesadesa.com

**Thom C**

HOT CROSS CRYONICS

## Hot Cross

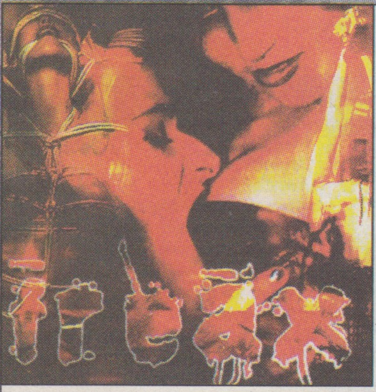
*"Cryonics"*

**(Level Plane)**

Hot Cross' second release, "Cryonic", is a respectfully solid hardcore album. Clean guitar riffs plucked at a mile a minute, frantic interludes with lots of mettle, visceral howls and poignant lyrics juggled by dual vocalists are a constant throughout; however, you do feel a bit of disjointed inconsistency in the production. On various tracks the vocals are overpowered by the music, with the layering of instruments and vocals done a bit clumsily. It doesn't take place on every track, but the listener can't help but take notice when the lyrics are swallowed by the heavy-hitting drums or a weighty bass line. The lyrics are evocative and poetic, serving up a sharp and intelligent dirge that thankfully doesn't reek of machismo. And despite the minor technical details, the album chugs along radiating the ethic, spirit and energy that has been relatively lost in the hardcore scene for the past few years.

www.level-plane.com/hotcross

**Miss Mia**



## Freax

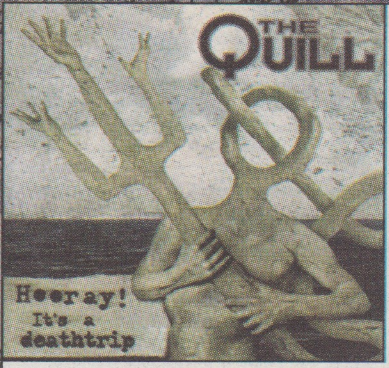
*"Untitled"*

**(Self-Released)**

This album is on the glammier side of the electronic/industrial genre. It has loud distorted guitars, a bass-driven funk-oriented underbelly that is sometimes ousted by the encroachment of a far darker sound. If you went to one of those fetish clubs where people like to wear pleather vests and vinyl leggings you wouldn't be surprised in the slightest to hear music just like Freax thumping away and shaking the floor through gigantic god-awful subwoofers. If it matters to you, a guy named Keith Caputo who used to sing for Life of Agony now sings for Freax. Sometimes there are songs that pop up on this album that are damn surprising. One tune makes me imagine what would happen if Queens of the Stone Age became a glammy goth band. The song after that one makes me take note that this Keith Caputo guy really is an exceptional singer, and I mean that, "singer." The guy can actually sing which is something I find rare in the alternative music culture of mumblers, screamers and users of heavy vocal distortion. The band apparently started in Brazil in the 80's and due to one sad and fatal mishap the band ended up on hold for fourteen years. That's quite a long time to be on ice, but never-the-less here they are back in action in 2003 with what I'm sure must be a significantly altered line-up. Dreamy, funky, spacey and sometimes heavy, Freax are a lot of things, but they aren't boring or predictable.

www.freax.com

**DICK**



## The Quill

*"Hooray! It's a Death Trip"*

**(SPV)**

From straight outta the late eighties and the cusp of the early nineties comes The Quill. Fans of Soundgarden circa "Louder Than Love" will no doubt rejoice and say, "Hooray! It's a Soundgarden Clone!" They have the sound a lot of small-town bands were aiming for in the early nineties. The Quill sounds like one of those small town bands who stuck with it, achieved the sound a decade out of date, and got signed to a European record label where being a decade out of step with the rest of the planet never hurt anybody, and it certainly doesn't hurt me. If nothing else, The Quill proves that the roots of a lot of so-called stoner metal doesn't necessarily burrow all the way back to the seventies, but really no further than Seattle 1990. Sure, Seattle 1990 was plucking influence from Sabbath, Led Zeppelin and countless punk and new wave acts, but it certainly doesn't mean the newer stoner metal acts have any true knowledge or grasp of the lineage. The Quill wears their influences on their sleeve unashamedly, and it comes across in the passion, exuberance and mirthful bubbling over of all things rock.

www.thequill.nl

**DICK**

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DEMAND OF RECORD COMPANY.
PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT

## The Distillers

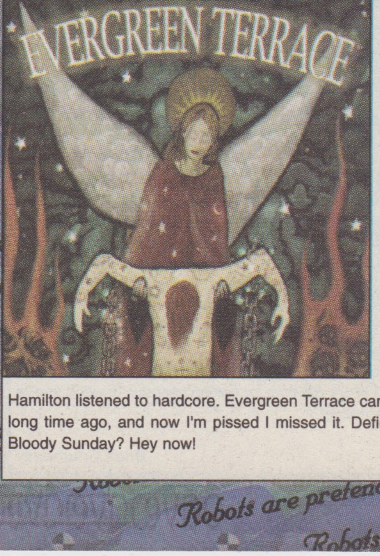
*"Coral Fang"*

**(Warner)**

Even though she may be the most hated woman in punk rock for dumping Tim Armstrong (Rancid), it's Brody Armstrong's music that is under the microscope today, not her personal life. The success of the Distillers' previous album "Sing Sing Death House", and more importantly, the success of the song "City Of Angels", has afforded the band the opportunity to move on to a major label for the release of "Coral Fang". Even with the hype of a major label behind them, the Distillers have still managed to turn in a powerful album chock full of rock. Right off the bat it's almost impossible to escape the similarities between Brody's singing and that of Courtney Love during Hole's "Live Through This" album. Despite that, this is pretty much exactly what you've come to expect from a Distillers album: fast, chuggy, punk rock anthems. There are some more somber moments throughout "Coral Fang", like "The Hunger", that see the band trying to explore new territory in order to avoid becoming stagnant and it works with moderate success. Will this album bring the band to the level of success they are hoping for? I don't think it will make them mega-stars but their fanbase will definitely grow. Is a decent record worthy of your $12? Fuck yeah.

www.thedistillers.com

**James Wright**



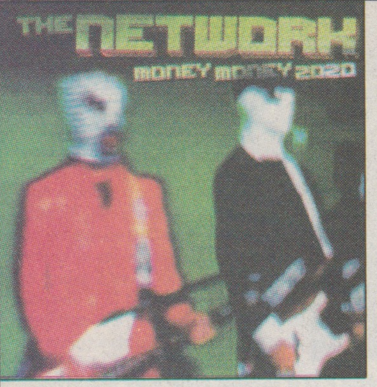
## Evergreen Terrace

*"Losing All Hope is Freedom"*

**(Indianola)**

Wahh? This release is like forty years old. Actually, it's two, but that's a long time in music years. Two years ago, Earth Crisis was a band, those goofy numetal clowns in Slipnot were popular and I lived 17 miles from where I do now. I'd actually only heard the rumor, not the band, but let me say, Evergreen Terrace is fucking dice. It's like early 90's hardcore from Jersey crawled out of some dusty crate buried in someone's 1987 Caprice and rocked. Totally brutal hardcore, thick riffs and with that tone deaf double kick, all that shit. This is what Helmet's first album "Born Annoying" woulda sounded like if Page Hamilton listened to hardcore. Evergreen Terrace came through my town with 18 Visions once a long time ago, and now I'm pissed I missed it. Definitly worth it. Wait, what's this? A cover of Bloody Sunday? Hey now!

**PR!**



### The Network

***"Money Money 2020"***

**(Adeline)**

So if you're one of those people who check on all the music gossip sites, you probably have read the Adeline press releases on The Network and read/listened to comments from label owner/Green Day singer/speculated Network vocalist Billie Joe like, "All I gotta say is fuck the Network, those guys are totally spreading rumors. I tried to do those guys a favor by bringing them to this country, and putting out their record, and this is how I get repaid, by talking shit about my band. Anyways, unfortunately, there's a contract and I have to put out their record, so the only thing I can say is fuck you, Network." Regardless of who is actually in the band (the names in the CD insert are all gibberish; a few songs vocals are obviously Billie Joe's) this is a pretty decent album. It's basically Devo + synth punk + Pinhead Gunpowder, and done pretty well over the twelve tracks on the album, with highlights like "Supermodel Robots", "Spike" and "Money Money 2020" getting stuck in your head like Columbian forest ticks. Also included is a DVD with music video's for every track, a cool bonus I wish other labels would figure out.

**PR!**

RAGE
SOUNDCHASER

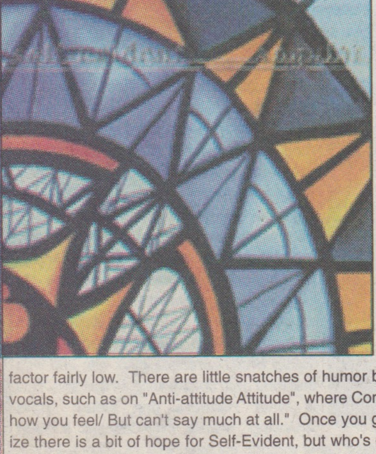
### Rage

***"Soundchaser"***

**(SPV)**

Rage is a band that goes back to 1983. They're German; they've been incredibly prolific with over 25 LPs, EPs, live and acoustic releases. No light-weights, eh? I was digging the Rage sound back in high school, and something in the fogbank of reminiscence I still do enjoy Rage. Their last album, "Unity", I thought was right on track. This new album, however, is experiencing some metal bloat. This one has the classic Rage sound that goes all the way back to '88's "Perfect Man" album; that's not the problem, but the ridiculous "concept" of this album is where the metal bloat comes in. The album supposedly tells a story about some alien created robots that are discovered by archeologists under the arctic ice-shelf and then rebuilt, combined with human genes. These guys are called soundchasers; they're programmed to kill terrorists and they're activated with music. The album supposedly tells the tale of the last soundchaser as it's nearing death. Boy, oh boy! I'm a sci-fi geek, but lord all mighty, man, I sure can't take this silly narrative. But that doesn't mean I can't take the music. I can ignore the lyrics and the story they tell, right? Sure I can, and I do because the music is worth it: tight, technically inspired and thoughtful with great structure and big choruses.
www.rage-on.de

**DICK**



### Self-Evident

***"Angular"***

**(Blue Worm)**

All of Southern California is on fire. As I write this, the Modern Fix compound is being evacuated and is preparing for the worst. Of course, I'm in Santa Barbara and the only fire around here is the one in my belly from my killer tempura. Self-Evident is from Minnesota, which rarely catches on fire. "Angular" is a post-punk, screamy nine track LP full of discordant snips of chaos and math-rock rhythms; a real mess of noise and not a whole lot else. While a few harmonies or melodies could have saved "Angular" from its jingly-jangly demise, the strict confines of the cacophonic beats keep the listenability factor fairly low. There are little snatches of humor buried within the spastic chords and snarled vocals, such as on "Anti-attitude Attitude", where Conrad Mach yelps, "Shut up before I know just how you feel/ But can't say much at all." Once you get past the quirky song structure you'll realize there is a bit of hope for Self-Evident, but who's got time for getting past quirks when you've got to evacuate your headquarters? Not this midget.
www.self-evident.net

**Brian Greenaway**

THE LOCUST
PLAGUE SOUNDSCAPES

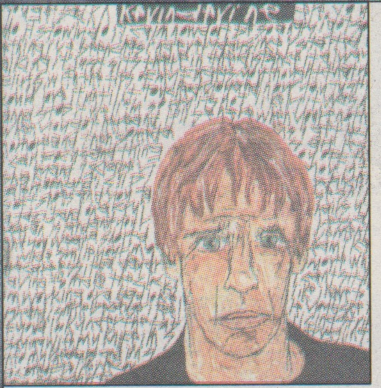
### The Locust

***"Plague Soundscapes"***

**(Anti)**

The Locust are one of those strange things that don't emerge into the mainstream very often. Aspects of the underground are always infiltrating and eventually becoming the mainstream; like the way a bunch of kids will move into a gnarly part of town and within a few years there's a Starbucks and a bunch of yuppies pushing rent through the roof. The Locust don't work like that. They are an anomaly. Instead of becoming more compromising or accessible they're becoming more extreme and terrifyingly precise in the way they're taking apart everything "rock band" or even "punk" has meant so far. They are not an inviting project. They aren't trying to seduce half-assed people who take culture in on recreational levels. The Sex Pistols and Nirvana were essentially pop bands, despite their modest amount of envelope pushing (mostly pre-accomplished by lesser-known artists who preceded and inspired them). Not that there's anything "wrong" with that. Those bands are great. Pop can be great. But the Locust are one of those bands who have become popular almost in spite of themselves. It's a huge "fuck you" to everything we perceive as normal, or even useful, and the kids are even saying "fuck you" back half the time, but they keep wanting more. They're getting something genuine out of it. Frequently on levels they might not consciously perceive. It's not a swindle. This is incredibly difficult, elaborate music that wasn't contrived as a joke. The Locust are not pandering to the "closet punk" tastes of corporate types slumming around on the internet. It's like the difference between reading Kerouac or Bukowski and thinking you're pushing some kind of boundaries within yourself and then reading something really challenging and progressive like William Burroughs or Kathy Acker. Listening to "Plague Soundtracks" is like reading "Naked Lunch" or "Empire of the Senseless". It's sickening and invigorating and beautiful all at the same time. Something that feels almost opaque when you first confront it, but gives way to a realm of previously unknown sensational capacities if you let it in and move through. The Locust are breaking themselves and they're trying to break you. If you're scared, turned off or just bored then you probably need it more than you know.

**Zack**



### Kevin Devine

***"Make The Clocks Move"***

**(Triplecrown)**

Kevin Devine is pitiful. I don't know if he's actually trying to make us feel sorry for him, or if he's just had a bad go of things and writes about it. From his singing about drinking too much, losing all his friends, everyone being materialistic, and of course losing the girl, I'm jumping out of my window. This is hybrid emo. Most of the songs on "Make The Clocks Move" are acoustic guitar and vocals. There are some songs with clean guitars, and some minor drum work. The quality of Kevin's voice is good, the message is a little somber. These days we're trained to be into the real drastic highs and lows. The audience wants to be roller coasted through their experience, and a completely acoustic album tends to feel slow for too long. When you have enough problems of your own, who needs to worry about Kevin Devine's.
www.triplecrownrecords.com

**Thom C**

### Alias

***"Muted"***

**(Anticon)**

Alias is bugged. Caught somewhere in that electro-fantasy world between Mantronix and London Town Dub. His freak out beats will have the Boom-bappers and the Acid-tabbers Dos-E-Doh-ing in a gritty spiral of madness. "Muted" spraypaints a burner in the darkest corners of your attic. It's not a very soothing piece, but dubby enough to evoke wide-eyed dream sequences of a wicked world, where drum beats replace national anthems. With only two vocal tracks, featuring Markus Archer of Notwist and Pedestrian, this set of beats will have MC's grabbing for pens, and Shroomers running from shadows. If you are a fan of this Midwest underground conglomerate Anticon., then you will surely like the dub version. If you like crisp, jiggy-synth club bangers, take your ass to Sam Goody, and find something else.
www.anticon.com

**Hugh Knight**

## Bright Calm Blue

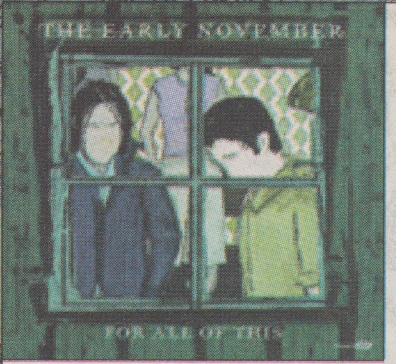
*"A Direct Approach For Casual Conversation"*

**(Level Plane)**

Hey buddy, cheap whiskey warms up the ole tum tum. Didn't you always think that Sour Mash was sort of a suspect name for booze? This weekend my buddy Donnie barfed up a plate of spaghetti in the bushes after one chug of this poo-poo. Seeing people puke always makes me laugh my ass off, how about you? These are all direct approaches to casual conversation. OK well, how to describe Bright Calm Blue? Well, they sound kind of indie, kind of punk and kind of metal. The vibe of the songs at times reflects hints of prog-rock, and the snotty mathematical rants of post-punk. "A Direct Approach For Casual Conversation" has some originality, but occasionaly loses soul at times of overt technicality. Not that this is Rush or anything but, sometimes less is more. In the morning my pee-pee is too yellow and I know I need more water.

www.level-plane.com

**Thom C.**



## The Early November

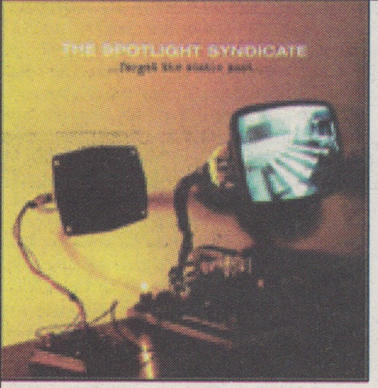
*"For All of This"*

**(Drive-Thru)**

Combining elements of quite a few of today's more wussy acts (Simple Plan, Dashboard Confessional), The Early November croon their way through their eight-track EP with decidedly mixed results. Flying the emotional flag high, The Early November rides the gamut from heavy rock band to pensive soft-core at the drop of a hat. The wanking mediocrity of "Ashala Rock", with all of its rambling pseudo-breakdowns and heavy-handed vocals contrasts so sharply with the simple, almost doo-wop feel of "Come Back" that it's not even funny. Or maybe it is, I don't know. The Early November are a band unafraid to go acoustic, as "Sunday Drive" is a soft reminder of days gone by with its gentle strumming and picking. This enhanced CD serves up a few cuts that didn't make the album, sung softly by lead singer Ace Enders, that are pretty fair, in an acoustic sort of way. "For All of This" might not be as impressive as TEN's latest release, "Room's Too Cold" but the same subtle strains and emotive lyrics are there for you, sappy bastard that you are.

www.theearlynovember.com

**Brian Greenaway**



## The Spotlight Syndicate

*"...Forget the Static Past"*

**(Substandard)**

I can appreciate where these fellas are coming from. Record players with mounted televisions, and other extra unneeded lights and gizmos attached. Mad Max. Blade Runner. A bass player, a keyboardist, and a drummer as your sole members. They're Trekkies! A new breed though; this is neo-art Trek. The songs on "...Forget the Static Past" are punky space tunes with whiny vocals and a heavy jerking dance vibe. If you're going to get down to this you virtually will have to have full body spasms. Either that or I just imagined that dancing a jig elbows high and feet skipping would fit, and look pretty entertaining. The low end is completely absent on almost all three instruments, which gives the recording somewhat of a thin feel. If you're writing a dance song there has to be something with some kick. I mean, Cap'n Kirk kicked ass, you know?

www.thespotlightsyndicate.com

**Thom C**

## The Phantom Limbs

*"Displacement"*

**(Alternative Tentacles)**

Listening to a Phantom Limbs album is like attending a heavy metal circus while peaking on acid-a wonderful experience, I guarantee you. Their new album continues down the same path as their first, "Applied Ignorance," which is a good thing. You can almost picture a psychotic, child-molesting clown creeping quietly behind you with an enormous machete and a wild-eyed ringmaster with a spiked whip and long moustache calling the shots while an army of shit-flinging monkeys with hatred in their eyes do their thing. It's all wrapped into this nifty package of chaotic bliss. Some of the keyboard work reminds me a bit of Murder City Devils, but the songs are far more frantic and entrancing. There's a bit of early Alice Cooper, The Birthday Party and Bauhaus lurking in there somewhere too. The only thing I can say about this album that isn't glowing with admiration is that the songs tend to melt together without much diversion from the Phantom Limbs' distinct blueprint. On the other hand, this is a strong point of the disc as well, as it pulls the whole thing together into a tight, cohesive nightmare.

www.thephantomlimbs.com

**Stacy Brandt**

## Stop It!

*"Self-Titled"*

**(Robotic Empire)**

First off, cover art and layout for "Stop It" is great. The point is made that it is done completely without the use of computers, impressive these days. The only reason I mention it is because sometimes bands (or record labels) neglect it. Artwork starts to build an impression right from the start. Now the music. Very experimental, this shit is more criss-crossed than a bum's muff. The drums keep it solid but stay catchy, bass is chunky and sways like a boat, guitars are rabid but settle at times to catch a breath. The only short coming may be the vocals. They're raw, scratchy and have lots of energy, but to me sometimes screaming all the time can be a cop out. I'm not saying that everyone has to sing like a pro, but massaging notes at the right time can really bring a song together. Through and through "Stop It!" is erratic, melodic, and energized. It will have you feeling like you're malfunctioning, and at times like you can just sway. It's worth a try.

www.roboticempire.com

**Thom C.**

## Radio Berlin

*"Glass"*

**(Action Driver)**

This isn't an import compilation of songs from the German radio station but a fuckin' rad post-punk-pop-wave album from Canada's Radio Berlin. Usually band's that sound like this get pushed into the 'been there, heard that' pile of the unsimulative bullshit, but this is different. Well, different in that they're good, but can probably be lumped into the proximity of other Canadian acts, like Hot Hot Heat or Red Light Sting. Press your thumb, index and middle finger into a triangle formation on your chin, and picture The Cure, Joy Division and Depeche Mode, then add increased experimentation in song structures and breaks. This is a solid release from the five year old Radio Berlin, and while songs like the catchy, radio-friendly "Suitcase" will feed the masses, tracks like the tepidly provocative "Aftermath" will be our little secret.

www.radio-berlin.com

**PR!**

T.S.O.L. DIVIDED WE STAND
TRUE SOUNDS OF LIBERTY

### T.S.O.L.

***"Divided We Stand"***

**(NITRO)**

Naturally, T.S.O.L. breaks no new ground with "Divided We Stand". That's why it rules: they haven't fucked with what's made them so cool for the past few albums. Let's face it, this slightly poppy sound that singer Jack Grisham has taken during the Nitro albums is infectious. The little melodic barbs shoot out of the speakers and stick into your brain like parasites. They refuse to let you think of anything other than chanting "sex, sex, sex/fuck the violence" at the top of your lungs. Songs range from the depressing melancholy of "Again", through to the cheesy bravado of "Fuck You Tough Guy", but not one song is something unexpected or disturbing. While there is something to be said for an album that makes you stand up and take notice at its diversity, "Divided We Stand" makes a case for sticking to your guns and delivering nothing but steadfast punk rock rampant with smart-ass lyrics and hyper delivery.

www.truesoundsofliberty.com

**Keith Carman**

PENNYWISE
FROM THE ASHES

### Pennywise

***"From the Ashes"***

**(EPITAPH)**

When you put on a Pennywise album, it's just like putting on an old coat--you know you can always count on it to meet your expectations. However, although putting on an old reliable coat is comforting, it eventually gets, well, old. Not straying far from their usual blueprint for generating solid music, "From the Ashes" does very little experimentation in sound and formula, and you almost wish that Pennywise would find the motivation to put a new spin on things. But if you're all about being placated, then their seventh studio album, "From the Ashes", has that same familiar punk stomp and carries the same catchy sing-along vibe as all their other releases. Still just as politically infused, the stoic lyrics are carried on crunchy, buzzsaw guitar licks and frantic drum beats. Even without any real stand out song like "Society" or "Bro Hymn", Pennywise still pulls off a concrete album that doesn't displease. The biggest selling point of the album? The free DVD that shows Fletcher puking multiple times.

www.pennywise.com

**Miss Mia**

FROM AUTUMN TO ASHES
the fiction we live

### From Autumn To Ashes

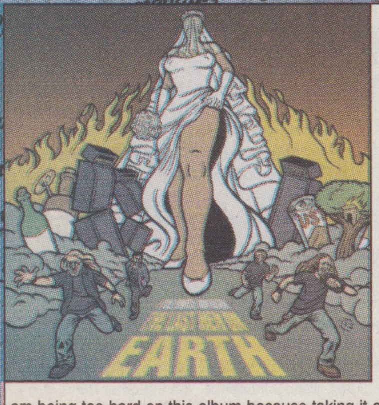
***"The Fiction We Live"***

**(VAGRANT)**

The more "The Fiction We Live" rattles around in my trusty old CD player, the more I realize that From Autumn to Ashes are being dealt one crummy hand. While Avenged Sevenfold are primped and primed to replace AFI in the underground gothic punk scene (see our review elsewhere in this issue), this band continues to release album after stellar album of like-minded music. A touch heavier than either of their contemporaries for the most part, this release relishes in pounding listeners over the head with direct death metal and hardcore influence. But before you write them off as another collection of black metal goofballs, realize that when FATA emote on "The Fiction" they are one hell of a depressingly beautiful band: A track like "No Trivia" would be equally at home on Sing The Sorrow with its expressive, effeminate vocal delivery and dissonant musical tendencies. It could even be a radio hit with people who miss the bawling, self-loathe of early 80's new wave. This is obviously a band of incredible musicians with just as much introspection as aggression. What a beautiful mix.

www.fromautumntoashes.com

**Keith Carman**


THE LAST MEN ON EARTH

### Five Horse Johnson

***"The Last Men on Earth"***

**(SMALL STONE)**

There was a revival of Southern-tinged hard rock boogie that crested in the late '80s. Raging Slab rode that wave to major label success. Now, Raging Slab is a has-been and the sheen of the new-old angle on this has faded. Five Horse Johnson arose out of Toledo from the aftershocks of that revival to be premier members of a third wave of hard rock with a rootsy feel and pronounced bottom. On "The Last Men on Earth", Five Horse Johnson fails to add some new twist to give this tired beast a much-needed shot in the arm. The greater number of guitar solos signal regression, not progression. However, I am being too hard on this album because taking it off the timeline, this is an excellent album of that big-sounding blues-rock that also speaks to us from the early ZZ Top albums and the early Black Crows.

www.smallstone.com

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**

THOSE UNKNOWN

### Those Unknown

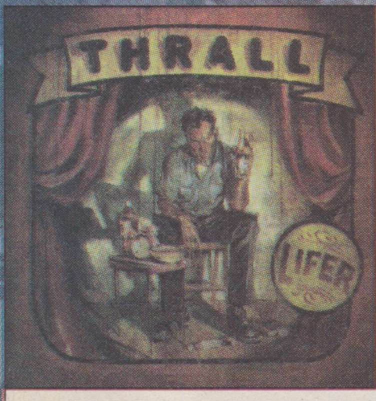
***"Self-Titled"***

**(TKO)**

This is a reissue of Those Unknown's 1995 debut CD. In hindsight, this album proves to be a high water mark in old school punk of the mid-'90s. The group has a tough, muscular street punk sound with nods to hardcore. At its feistiest it is what an old friend of mine would have descriptively called "booth thrash". There is a real working class attitude here ("Bound for Glory, Headed for Hell") and slight English accent that makes the music oi-friendly. The original release has been expanded to fourteen by the addition of two bonus tracks. All the lyrics are provided and there are liner notes from band member Rich Owens. In today's largely apolitical neo-punk scene the incisive radicalism of those unknowns in refreshing and Rich Owens fairly calls for a revolution in his liner notes. Should a revolution come, this would be an ideal soundtrack. Punk revival that is RIYL: Sham 69, The Business, The Adicts.

www.tkorecords.com

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**



### Thrall

***"Lifer"***

**(ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES)**

Thrall's Mike Hard (God Bullies) continues to deliver kick-ass hard rock with lyrics to commit to heart. It is fitting that Thrall come onto the Alternative Tentacles roster because Jello Biafra's lifelong message of anti-authoritarian individualism matches Mike Hard's message. While this album does not rise to the level of God Bullies' "Mamawombwomb" or Thrall's "Hung Life God", this is a smart, post-metal hard rock album that has got more to say and a better way of saying it than most comparable 2004 releases.

www.AlternativeTentacles.com

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**

Robots are pretending they know you

Destruction
METAL

## Destruction

***"Metal Discharge"***

**(Nuclear Blast)**

The reigning motherfuckin' kings of metal have returned. There's just no two ways about it, Destruction are the best 'rip your face and salt the wound' full speed metal unit out there. The vocals are caustic and the guitar delightfully rubs each and every riff in your face like a bad dog's nose in shit. The music is cheerfully up-tempo, but filled with more aggression than all those down-beat NuMetal bands combined. There's no fucking pretense here. It's all goddamn NOW tense. The core of this band since day one way back in '84, Schmier and Sifringer, are such well-seasoned pros that I dare you to find one false note or wrong move anywhere on "Metal Discharge." And for those metal leery folk out there who take a look at the band name and the album title and expect a bunch of songs for metal fans about metal music (à la Manowar) well, you can change your expectations. These Germans are politicized. The song "Desecrators of the New Age" is an anti-war masterpiece. In stores this comes with a second CD full of covers and demo tracks including a cover of Metallica's "Whiplash" and an excellent rendition of The Exploited's "Fuck the USA." There's nothing about this album that's a let down. It firmly bridges old Destruction from just before Schmier's departure (Release From Agony) with their newer, going for broke, no-holds-barred style. They're better than ever. And I'm not sure, but the album's intro sounds like it might be a slight jab in Metallica's collective ribs. As the album opens the guitar sounds distant and thin, the drums like a pickle bucket and the bass doesn't exist, then after about five seconds all the levels come up and the real shredding begins. I'm not sure if this is intentional ribbing at the expense of St. Anger or not, but if it is, it's classic.

www.destruction.de

**DICK**

## Vaux

***"There Must be Some Way to Stop Them"***

**(Volcom Entertainment)**

"This is the anthem of the year and I'm fucking gold" declares the opening line on Vaux's latest release "There Must be Some Way to Stop Them." I can remember last year some time when …And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead was heralded as releasing the best record of the year for their respective genre, and if all that jazz was true, Vaux could fittingly be awarded that title for this year. I say that because the two bands sound similar with Vaux taking a more aggressive approach. Vaux sets an impressive standard as far as songwriting goes, and having three guitar players I guess can't hurt, right? "Fame" explores verses full of interesting timing accents fused together with choruses that prefer the more straight-ahead approach. The album's artwork also attracted my attention because it follows a mythology-like theme with intriguing graphics depicting scenes of slain Medusas and gods of lightning. Vaux is definitely a band to keep your eyes on, especially if they continue to come up with release as good as this one.

www.vauxrock.com

**Campbell**

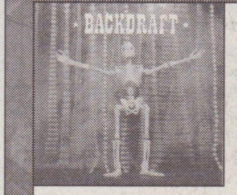
## Cradle of Filth

***"Damnation & A Day"***

**(Sony)**

Before I get into the review, let me first tell you a little of what I'm not. I'm not one of those 'too cool to be goth, to gay to be metal' fruitloops that make up the majority of Cradle of Filth's (CoF from now on) fans. I'm not into the lyrics of CoF's ("Heart in hand passed clasp of pain, In dark lowland that set bad blood in veins, Burning, like penal fires roused to strain, The jagged-toothed skyline braced with crosses" - from CoF's "Better To Reign In Hell") or it's surrounding genre. If anything, I, as a CoF fan, exist in this growing minority of people that don't get into the genre but are specifically attracted to Cof. That said, this is an excellent band I highly recommend to anyone. It's just so fucking evil sounding! The opening track of this album pulls you in the mood; a haunting brood of background noise, orchestrated carefully with choir harmony and the spoken words of "And the Earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep..." to sound powerfully evil. Then, you're pushed into the second track, "The Promise of Evil" which is a classic example of why I love CoF. It sounds evil. Everything about the band. The screeching lead vocals of Dani, the constant double bass drumming, all of it just feels so wrong and I implore you to prove otherwise. My mom isn't pregnant and is too old to be, but I bet if I played her this album, she's immediatly start miscarriaging.

**PR!**



## Backdraft

***"Here to save you all"***

**(Abstract)**

Backdraft is bringing butt rock back. Shooting straight out of Sweden (mother of other great artists such as Ace of Base and ABBA) and boasting a growing stateside fan base, these five long hairs can expect a huge success in the trailer park communities of Alabama. A southern rock influence shoots through these Swedes like tobacco en route to the spittoon. Even with their southern rock sound, their blonde locks and leather cowboy hats may not sit well with the true southern rockers. Britney Spears has already begun an anti-Backdraft campaign. She was not quoted as saying, "These four guys from Sweden think they can come over and take over the south. Well I have news. I'm from Loosey-Anna and I own the south. I'm the definition of southern rock." Backdraft was unavailable for comment. Their press release compares them to Lynyrd Skynyrd and Corrosion of Conformity, but that is wishful thinking. A closer comparison would be along the lines of White Snake, Saigon Kick and an unpolished Alice in Chains. But the music world works in cycles and maybe it is time for butt rock's return. If so, Backdraft is ready to usher in a new age of head banging, long hair and suit cases of PBR. And Britney, you know you love it.

www.backdraft.web.com

**Pete Soyer**

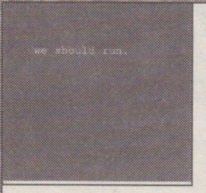
## The Bled

***"Pass the Flask"***

**(Fiddler)**

This band makes From Autumn to Ashes flinch. Why? Because they're way fucking better, that's why. It's like Converge stood up and said "hey, let's cut the excess bullshit from our music. We'll do straight up hardcore with lots of double kick and the occasional razor sharp metal leads. Oh, and we're now called The Bled." And that's exactly how it happened.

**PR!**



## We Should Run

***"Self-Titled"***

**(Self-Released)**

We should all run, really. We're a nation of fatasses. Have you got good look at some of these people in the grocery store, really? Holy Moses, they are fat. And how about Disneyland? So many fat people with their busted-ass Midwest accents it's not even funny. We Should Run is a rock band. That's right, rock music. Some people still play it. Their little six-track EP sounds a little like that crappy band Three Doors Down, which really sucks, only it's not nearly that bad. Vocalist Jonah Rivera has got a manly, thick voice, which makes him sound way older than he is, so don't be surprised if your mom jacks this CD from your collection and rocks out to it when you're off at school. While the look and feel may scream "punk!" the sound is undeniably bits and pieces of post-Soundgarden nonsense. Not that Soundgarden really made that much sense in the first place. Get some exercise, fatty.

www.weshouldrun.com

**Brian Greenaway**

ani difranco
EVOLVE

## Ani DiFranco

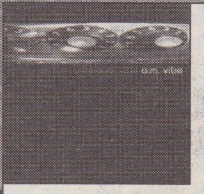
***"Evolve"***

**(Righteous Babe)**

Here is an excellent assemble of a dozen new studio tracks from DiFranco's 5-piece band. She began working with this setting a few years back and focused on fusing melodic songwriting with attributes of funk. "Evolve" appears to be the culminating synthesis of these disparate approaches to music with ample similarity to her especially successful neo-folk sound of the '90s to satisfy purist fans. Ani DiFranco returned to performing solo, but fortunately for us she captured in the studio on new material the musicians she has melded with as a touring unit of recent years: Julie Wolf (keyboards), Hans Teuber (reeds), Jason Mercer (bass) and Daren Hahn (drums) as well as a three-piece horn section.

www.RighteousBabe.com

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**



## A.M. Vibe

***"Self-Titled"***

**(Silvergirl)**

Power-chord driven rock music with nothing too noticeable or out of the norm. I guess when it really comes down to it, this band has an A.M. vibe. Don't get me wrong, I'm not knocking them and I'm sure they are a wonderful band to have in the Solana Beach scene, but they are not a life changing experience. A couple of the tracks are noteworthy, such as "hyde park" and "light blue", but for the most part this album was in one ear and out the other. It would be my recommendation that if this band wants to take it to the next level that they need to speed up their songs, get another guitarist (you need more than just rhythm all the time) and possibly consider using vocal harmonies. As a three piece rock group a.m. vibe is doing their thing, nothing too flashy and nothing too crazy.

www.amvibe.com

**Tom**

ALEXISONFIRE

## Alexisonfire

***"Self-Titled"***

**(EQUAL VISION)**

Tricky guitar interplay and double vocals are the defining features here. And yeah, one vocalist screams harshly while the other counters with a more smoothed out yell. Anyone else notice this is the flavor de-jour lately? It's getting so bad, people are going to start appreciating bands because, "Dude, they only have ONE singer, crazy huh?" But not Alexisonfire. And by the way, it's "Alexis" that is on fire, not Alex. Of course, I got it wrong right away and looked stupid. Fuck you guys for messing with my head. But musically this hits somewhere between an edgy indie rock band, flirting with hardcore but aligning itself with the newer breed of erratic and spastic energy rock (Blood Brothers, The Bled) but coming off much more focused. And when they get all love stricken, it even holds credibility. "This is a .44 caliber love letter straight from my heart". Hey, if you are gonna be a sap writing about love, at least do it like that. Some parts are extremely loud and erratic, some parts are soft and melodic. And with a flip of the switch, you might be tossed and torn back and forth between the two. There are two vocal modes happening here. The guy who can sing, and the guy who can't. And since it's the guy who can't who gets the lions share of the vocal lines, it's definitely a line drawn as far as the limits this band puts on itself and the fans it will attract. Although “rawr rawr rasp rawr” is an acceptable form of vocals in these new school indie-emo-hardcore-erratic-rock hybrids, Alexisonfire could be that much more with two vocalists with range instead of one. When the music is obviously striving for such range, emotion, commitment to structure and dynamic, why cannot the same be expected from the all the vocals? You have all these musical dynamics sweeping you around and pushing you down and building you up... and this lone rasp of a vocal element that comes in pulls all the shine off the song. It brings in some good energy and that works for certain parts, but generally it would have worked better if they let the other guy sing. But the music is damn solid, melding that heavy indie guitar rock with small bursts of hardcore tempered by the soft interludes that are always shattered by the end of the song. But as they say on their track "The Kennedy Curse", and I quote, "Raaaawr raawwwp, rawwwar rarrwarr raaalp".

**Bushman**

LFTR PLLR
Soft Rock
SOFT ROCK

## Lifter-Puller

**"SOFT ROCK"**

**(SELF-STARTER FOUNDATION)**

In a perfect world, Lifter Puller would have been on the first cover of Modern Fix. That was my plan. They were the hippest thing I had found in months at the time (about 3 years ago). Then I found out they had just broken up a few months prior to the start of Modern Fix. Since then, their "Fiestas + Fiascos" (their last release) has become a "classic" in my CD jukebox. If for no other reason then there just isn't a band like Lifter Puller. Their singer is totally unique (which will put him the 'love it' or 'hate it' position with most people). With a nasal charm and a club-geek sensibility, Craig Finn would spin genius, drug addled and alcohol-filtered sermons of life, love, death and the ecstasy in between. The downward spiral of their friends in all their glorious beauty seemed to be the common theme. The music was a smoking bowlful of indie-rock hipness. Always clever and continuously mining guitar hooks to sell for crack; it was just fucking different and cool. But they went away. The Self-Starter Foundation was kind enough to release this 2-CD set featuring tracks off their hard to find 7" and EP's, as well as including all 11 tracks from "Half Dead and Dynamite". Plus three unreleased tracks and that rounds out disk no.1! Disk 2 is all 6 songs from "The Entertainment and Arts" EP in addition to their entire full length, self-titled first release. Basically, you pretty much get their entire catalog except for the aforementioned "Fiestas+Fiascos". So buy that, and this, and you got it all baby. Then beat yourself appropriately when you realize you missed the boat on this short-lived band.

**Bushman**

## Kids Near Water

***"Hey Zeus!"***

**(CANDLELIGHT)**

The English are way behind us on lots of things. The microwave, for one. Ketchup, for another. Kids Near Water is just the latest example of the UK being a day late and a buck short, as "Hey Zeus!" has all of the angular guitars and screamed lyrics of something coming out of the Midwest, only without much success. Still, it's nice to see the whole indie-emo craze has made it across the Atlantic-a lot of those pictures of kids I see in London look like Spock Rockers anyway (except for that Price William [what a dreamboat]). Anyway, Kids Near Water borrow quite a bit from Glasseater and Girls Against Boys in that their sound is mildly aggressive, albeit with more than a prudent amount of posturing. The bark achieved by say, Glasseater for example, never matures into anything more than a few whimpers on "Hey Zeus!", due largely to the fact that the album changes direction so many times that anything resembling a collective whole has been shot to hell by track six. And let's not mistake a lack of focus or theme for eclecticism, either. While bands like Hot Water Music or even Modest Mouse score points for adapting their sound to fit different genres, Kids Near Water is sitting on the fence of two distinct styles without doing either one justice.

**Brian Greenaway**

## Low Skies

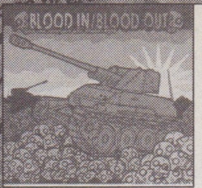
***"The Bed"***

**(FLAME SHOVEL)**

Glenn Danzig probably wouldn't like Low Skies, but the singer definitely sounds a little like Danzig in his later years. Low Skies is supposed be very "atmospheric" and "post-apocalyptic" sounding. The soundtrack for survivors of the apocalypse. They can call themselves what they want, but I'll just call them eerie and a little unnerving. This is the music I would put on if I was trying to get pumped up to be depressed, maybe jump off a building. The sound isn't hard or fast, it is just drawling and (as the name states) low. Some country influence comes out of Low Skies and makes for the best tempos on the album. "Palmyra's" organ adds a new level of the sublime, but stands strong on its own. The best part of the album is the artwork. At first glance I couldn't tell what was on the cover. That is the way a few of the pictures are and Low Skies probably intended it that way. When you realize what you are looking at, you feel (again) unnerved. The cover picture is a blurry photo of someone on the floor. The inside art shows different angles of someone on the floor with a black gun next to them. A little ode to suicide? Or maybe the answer to escape before the apocalypse? Either way, the art is great and it strengthens the mood Low Skies is creating. And now that I am sufficiently pumped to be depressed I'm going to go eat and then lay on my floor all day. Maybe cry a little.

www.lowskies.com

**Pete Soyer**



## Blood In/Blood Out

***"No One Conquers Who Doesn't Fight"***

**(SPOOK CITY)**

Hardcore, hardcore, hardcore, blah, blah, blah. So you can shout, big deal. Who can't shout, except for people who have lost their voice, like this one guy at work, who just makes weird motions and grunts a lot? So the first track, "What Once Was Within", has a total cock rock guitar solo that would make Eddie Van Halen blush with its audacity. The second track ("Mesh Hat Black Hair", in case you're keeping score) begins exactly the same as the first track, minus the bossanova guitar. Bad call, 'cos that virtuoso solo was all "No One Conquers" had going for it. Now, let's get back to the shouting-Jaaron Sanford (an unusually soulful name for such a whitie) has got one of those yells that's neither growl nor vocal, it's more of an inflated chest boast, full of testosterone soaked lyrics like, "Don't be surprised if I kick you when you're down," ("Behind False Names") and "I am half tempted to reach out and smack [that look] off your face" ("Stand Hard and Fall Hard"). If you think these sentiments sound similar to something Mr. Fred Durst would "sing" in one of his albums, I'd say you've got a fair point. If you wonder why Britney Spears would make out with him instead of me, I'd say you're not the only one.

**Brian Greenaway**

the Matches

## The Matches

***"E. Von Dahl Killed the Locals"***

**(SELF-RELEASED)**

First of all, this is the most professionally self-released album I have come across. If I were in charge of releasing of own album it would have a clip-art cover and I'd probably have my little sister draw some crayon stuff on the inside. Yeah, sounds cool, I know. The Matches sound cool, too. These young punks are from Oakland and they've got a pop-punk sound that spits out harmonious vocals and massive riffage without getting tiring or stagnant, a lot like Unwritten Law right around "Oz Factor". For a band of guys who aren't even old enough to buy alcohol yet, these guys have got a pretty good grasp of songwriting, as evidenced on "Eryn Smith", with the couplet you wish you could say to your girlfriend, "You're the dimple in my cheeks that I can't spit out/ You're the smile in my eyes that I can't cry out" and now, thanks to The Matches, you can. OK, so I've been listening to a little more of the CD as I write this and there are a few times when the album slows due to the repetitive choruses, but that's one of those things you chalk up to not having a producer, so we'll forgive these NorCalers and watch for them to sign a big contract to a major label, learn to hate each other and then break up with great anticipation.

www.thematches.com

**Brian Greenaway**

## Reburn and the Skidmarks

***"Tired of the Same Ol' Fuck?"***

**(SELF-RELEASED)**

I have decided to be famous. Seriously famous, like Simon Shadwell, the guy who invented the zipper. OK, I don't know who invented the zipper, I totally made that up. I do want to be famous though; that would be rad. Nobody from Reburn and the Skidmarks will ever be famous. All their songs go like this, "I like pussy, I like tits, big tits, small tits, I don't care tits." Like that, over and over for like five songs and after two I gave up and tried banging my head on my desk for fun. It was better than the CD but I don't really recommend it. I do recommend being famous, though. It seems like a good job if you can get it. Reburn and his not-so-famous Skidmarks don't have any musical talent. They're like The Bloodhound Gang of punk, only with less Casio and more suck, if that's possible. If it seems like I'm having trouble thinking of anything to write it's probably due to all of the desk-banging. I apologize, but I really feel the apology is owed me by the four idiots from Reburn. Non-famous jerkoffs.

www.shittyassrecords.com

**Brian Greenaway**

## The Return

***"Build Me A Reason"***

**(Missing Words)**

The second full-length album from this unbelievable reggae, ska, and rock influenced band out of Ventura, CA. I fortunately had a chance to see this band earlier this year and their live performance left me speechless. One of the things I couldn't get over at the return show is how much the crowd got into it. I guess ska beats with a singer who has a strong powerful voice and a bassist who probably knows every Marley jam ever made makes for some pretty danceable jams. Quite honestly, I had never heard them before, but I was dancing around like a white boy just like everyone else (except I didn't have any cool Converse shoes like the rest of the crowd). Also, the drummer seems to just wander through songs effortlessly, but with such ability (I love the echo drums like Sublime used!). On the new record lead singer Derek Jennings and company have given up some of the really ska type jams and replaced those with more reggae and even key based jams like "broken record" and "ambition". Seriously, the best qualities of O.A.R. and Rx Bandits rolled up into one. As a matter of fact, this record was produced by Christopher Fudurich who produced the last Rx Bandits album and did a great job on this one. You'd be fucking nuts not to buy this album, but good luck finding it. I expect it to sell for a pretty penny on Ebay in a couple of years.

www.itsthereturn.com

**Tom**

manic hispanic

## Manic Hispanic

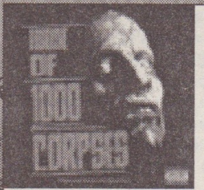
***"The Menudo Incident"***

**(BYO)**

Two words for you: fucking brilliant. Get your Pendleton and do-rag, Manic Hispanic is re-releasing their absolutely hilarious 1996 album that began it all, "The Menudo Incident" (a spoof of Guns n' Roses' "Spaghetti Incident"). Delivering a gut-wrenching, laughter-filled good time, these Orange County eses do punk rock karaoke barrio-style. Full of drive-by smilings and muchachos who are burnt out on Budweiser and having too many vatos living their casa, the album is a light-hearted parody of "Brown Pride" that reworks punk classics like the Clash's "Garage Land" into a Chicano-flavored "Barrio Land". With the members hailing from bands such as the Cadilllac Tramps and the Adolescents, even though the band has taken a witty, creative license with each song's original lyrics, they still play like serious musicians, performing clearly and sharply throughout. Other gems on the album include a new version of X's "Los Angeles" (East Los Angeles) and "Jet Muchacho" instead of "C'Est Plan Por Moi". Obra de arte genial (For those of you less fluent: it's a work of genius).

www.manichispanic.net

**Miss Mia**



## Various Artists

***"House of 1000 Corpses"***

**(Geffen)**

After years of protracted legal wrangling, Rob Zombie finally saw his splatter flick released. The movie "House of 1000 Corpses" is like H. G. Lewis's "10,000 Maniacs" crossed with "Texas Chainsaw Massacre". Liberal dialogue extracts are interspersed between the songs. Because, like the two movies mentioned, this film centers on a Southern locale trapped in the past, we get songs like Buck Owens Western ballad "Who's Gonna Mow Your Grass?" and "I Wanna be Loved by You" by Helen Kane, the voice of Betty Boop. Along with this we get "Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue" (The Ramones) and five new Zombie songs. This new Zombie material includes the strange combination of Rob Zombie with Lionel Ritchie and bawdy rapper Trina doing "Brick House 2003". The movie title song is one the strongest new Zombie tune here. It's a powerful southern gothic psychobilly tune that could easily fit in on any album from The Cramps. The full-color points also gets points for displaying the cast in the style of the Sean Tejaratchi-edited "Death Scenes: A Homicide Detective's Scrapbook".

www.houseof1000corpses.com

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**

## S PRCSS

***"MNML"***

**(Frenchkiss)**

I had one long distance relationship in high school that lasted for two years. I thought Sarah was the one I would marry, spend the rest of my life with. But we only got to see each other maybe twice a year for a single day when our sporting teams played each other. So the relationship ended with me finding someone a little closer (about two blocks away) and her going to college where she found cigarettes and a guy named Jeff. I have known a lot of people in long distance relationships that faltered, stumbled and eventually crashed so I do not have much faith in them. S PRCSS, however, has proven me wrong. Bob Doto, Daneil Mazone, and Julian Grefe used the mail to exchange sounds and ideas. They wrote long-distance songs from their homes in Boulder, Providence, and Philly, respectively. The end result is MNML and it is definitely a lasting love. I don't know what Bob, Daneil and Julian did that I failed to do with my long distance relationship, but whatever they did worked. Catchy lyrics with arty beats flow from every member. On "Our Bikes are Silver. Her Bed is Hers," piano sprinkles fall over minimal drums and a single guitar riff while the lyrics fly all over a demanded orgasm. "100,000 Runners" is organized chaos. No lyrics are attached, but imagining 100,000 people all running (race or no race) fits the music perfectly. "I'm a Cemente Mixier / I Heart You" sounds the way a hot road feels when the tar is melting. The sun is burning overhead and the asphalt is like black soup underfoot. This album is up with early Sonic Youth when they were the kings of the indie rock world. Just as every indie band from the late 80's has some Sonic Youth in them (whether they know it or not), every 2003 indie band could be better by listening to S PRCSS. I don't want every band to sound like S PRCSS, just listen and appreciate the ideas spewing from this disc. I hope these three can make the long distance relationship work. I hope they can prove me wrong. And Sarah, if you're still out there, listen to MNML and maybe we can figure out why our long distance love spoiled. I'm way cooler than Jeff anyway.

www.frenchkissrecords.com

**Pete Soyer**

Off With Your Head
Serious Suicide

## Serious Suicide

***"Off With Your Head"***

**(Blammy Bros.)**

The first track sounds like seventies glam plus a Ramones kick in the teeth with female vocals. From there the album mostly confuses me. At times slow and grungy at others quick and poppy and at still others the songs sound as if they were written for children. The overall effect is disorienting. The vocals have that sweet yet nasty element to them that I associate with Riot Grrrls in frilly lace baby doll dresses. The album title apparently refers to the head between a man's legs and not the one resting atop our necks. Yup, it's a castration song. I guess the world needs more merry bards telling us tales of castrations. The album has all the inspiration and originality one would expect coming out of Hollywood. From what I gather, the guitarist and chief songwriter is a leftover, a modern day refugee, of the bad boy glam era of the eighties. The band sounds bored of themselves as if even they can't get excited about their music. I know I'm having troubles getting excited. At their best they're the Dead Boys at their worst they'll sing about cutting off your dick.

www.serioussuicide.com

**DICK**

## Breather Resist

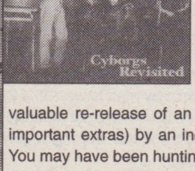
***"Only In The Morning"***

**(Deathwish Inc.)**

Blistering metalcore is the specialty of the day here. Breather Resist play some of the most heaviest shit in the vein of bands like Converge. Lead screamer Steve Sindoni wails out each song as though it's his very last breath, each note sang with conviction. His vocals are about as convincing as a sludge hammer to the face; very intense. There is some great guitar work here and some of the breakdowns are pretty damn memorable. My biggest complaint with this disc is each song bleeds right into the next without a break to let you know the song has finished. If you're not into extreme music that serves as nothing more than the heaviest material for entire duration of the CD then look elsewhere. In other words this CD is a 22-minute kick to the balls so cover your nuts. Being extremely heavy is one ting but you gotta have something to keep the listener coming back for more. In the case of Breather Resist there isn't a whole lot musically to keep me coming back for more than a couple listens.

www.deathwishinc.com

**James Wright**



## Simply Saucer

***"Cyborgs Revisited"***

**(Sonic Unyon)**

A seriously bizarre, early psych, mod, garage band. Think Os Mutantes, Syd Barret era Pink Floyd, the Velvet Underground, the Modern Lovers, early Red Crayola, Can, the Stooges . . . This is a valuable re-release of an important album (plus some not so important extras) by an incredibly innovative proto-punk band. You may have been hunting around for this for years. If so, you are in good luck here. A serious treat.

**Zack**

## Lyrics Born

***"Later that Day"***

**(Quannum Projects)**

Lyrics Born is less a rapper than a melancholic funk-riding, rhyme-spewing rock and roll super-cowboy. The Bay Area all-star's most recent jawn, "Later that Day" opens with the dark strings and menacing undertone of "Bad Dreams," a cut that is more evocative of early Doors than most contemporary hip-hop snoozers. The jam features a gritty, soulful chorus of "This situation is getting out of control," which is a sentiment that nutshells the reaction this record will juice out of most Quannum fans. Lyrics Born, anointed Tom Shimura by his mama, let's loose with a plethora of rhyme styles and schemes. From the intricately layered, filtered, and almost spoken-word vocals of "Cold Call," which features Blackalicious' Gift of Gab, to the free flowing stream of consciousness stylings of "Stop Complaining," to the Cut Chemist-graced throwback track "Do That There," L.B. gets downright out of sight on the mic. Somewhat inane and monotonous hooks on a few of the tracks only slightly detract from the foinky, string-drenched production and enlightened lyricism found on this through and through fresh-ass record.

**Scott Burroughs**

### Coheed and Cambria

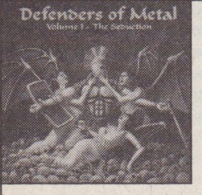
*"In Keeping Secrets of Silent Earth: 3"*

**(EQUAL VISION)**

It's not often that such an ambitious band finds its way into your great big box o' CDs to review for the month. Such is the case with Coheed and Cambria's "Silent Earth", however, a masterful jaunt through everything you love about emo and hardcore without all of those sappy lyrics and generic breakdowns. CO and CA's multi-layered and varied sound ranges from the stirring immediacy of acts like Hot Water Music and Hopesfall to the controlled fury of Thrice and Glassjaw while still managing to incorporate some of the catchier elements of The Get Up Kids. Sounds like a whole mess of bands, huh? Damn straight it does, and damn straight if Claudio Sanchez's gritty NYC vocals don't tear the lid off the whole g-damn thing. Beginning with heavily atmospheric songs like the title track (an eight minute song to start an album?! are you kidding me?!) and working its way into blistering cuts like "The Crowing" shows, not only, how versatile this band is, but how musically accomplished they are. Now, at times the length of some of the tracks can get a bit laborious, as CO and CA show time and again that passing the five-minute mark means they're just simmering gently. Still though, "Silent Earth" is a shining example of excellent musicians producing excellent music. I have a date now. Gotta go.

www.coheedandcambria.com

**Brian Greenaway**



### Defenders of Metal

*"Volume 1 - The Seduction"*

**(MAN IN BLACK MUSIC)**

An eighteen-track compilation of bands from the (Man In Black) record label. I don't know how to review a compilation. It seems cruel and unusual that I should have to review each track individually, but it seems mean-spirited not to, so, what the fuck, man? What do I do? Shit. Track 1. "Forbidden" by Jester's Moon. Old school heavy metal combining elements of heavy bands like Trouble with metal's more opera-esque side. Good riffs. Maybe a good band. Track 2. "Moonlit Horizon" by Moonlight Agony. Rapid double bass, power metal stylings, keyboards, and a very long intro for a track on a comp. They would've been better off getting to the meat right away. Is there a vocalist? I'll have to wait and see. Nope, no vocalist. Track 3. "Incubus" by The Prowlers. They have a late eighties sound and some interesting drum work. Track 4. "Pressure" by Element. Metal on the light side. Mumbling, Vic Chesnutty singer except when he shouts. Dull. Track 5. "Heart of Dragonsteel" by Maddog. Proggish power metal with Helloween tendencies from Austria. Track 6. "Dead Keep Dying" by Hell Candidates. Old school Savatage comes to mind; old school Savatage with a sub-par vocalist. Track 7. "Shutting the Door" by Antares. Wimpy Prog metal from Poland. Track 8. "Haunted" by Dr. Mastermind. What a stupid band name. Why do bands from the USA have all the suckiest names? The band has a familiar feel - kind of Motorheadish, but very straightforward metal-wise. It's good. Bikers might like it. Track 9. "Riflesso" by Metharia. Here's something cool. One part Danzig, one part Peter Murphy, one part Moonspell. Bass driven. Lovely Italian vocals. (okay, we're halfway through this thing. Hang in there) Track 10. "Bedlam" by Victim. Dark, power metal. Similar to Hell Candidates, but much better. Track 11. "Pride of Creation" by Art of Fear. Another Austrian band; this one proving that US bands don't corner the 'fershit' band name market. Fast kick-drum action. Gamma Ray, but lesser. Track 12. "Illusions" by Still Life. Sorrowful intro. That quickly picks up; lacks any real power. Young girls who want to listen to metal, but are too afraid, might find it useful. Could be Bon Jovi's favorite new band for all I know. Track 13. "Liegia" by Rapid Fire. Bad production with a stompy Anthrax like introduction that quickly absconds to prog metal territory. Pretty weak. Track 14. "Under the Gun" by Stairway. I like the Organ intro. This band sounds like they have the most confidence of any of the bands on this thing, and it comes across in the execution. Has a galloping feel to the music. I've heard better, but not on this comp. Track 15. "Only the Rain Crew" by Rain. Remember Los Angeles in the mid-eighties? Kind of like that. Track 16. "Bride of the Dark" by Mercury Rain. Could be the soundtrack for a grade-Z Italian horror movie. Sweet female vocals grace the music for this goth band on steroids. Some bad, wankish, guitar decisions, but otherwise tip-top. Track 17. "Terror Mind" by Sabatan. More power metal. Crue-like riff. Interesting vocals. Would I write home about it? At gun-point. Track 18. "The Sleeper" by Babylon. Finally, the last track. Is it a good capper? It has a lot of power, great low-end production, echoing vocals that have a certain gothic flavor and some nice throat-slicing guitars. Christian Death goes metal. It's a good capper. Whew, that was a lot of work, and I'm not sure if I'm a better person for it. My dad said work builds character. It also builds headaches.

www.maninblackmusic.com

**DICK**

### A Week in July

*"Nearfatalexplosion"*

**(ORANGE PEEL)**

Being from Pittsburgh, I have seen this band play before - specifically when they first formed as a band. This record is better than they were then, but it still doesn't break out of a mold that they have put themselves into. The drumming stands out against the average, but solid, stringed instruments and vocals. The songs are ones that you could expect to have heard before but with a little twist of AWIJ added for distinction from the countless bands playing similar music. Overall the music is just a little too predictable to me and that is why I am turning it off...now.

www.aweekinjuly.com

**Campbell**

### The Special Goodness

*"Land Air Sea"*

**(N.O.S. RECORDING)**

I believe the Spanish word is asi asi. This record is not bad, but not great. I wouldn't be surprised to find it in the used section at Music Trader, but for $8.99 I would actually ponder the purchase. God damn, how can you not want to shake your ass to pop rock? These songs have me jumping out of my chair, but I do have some qualms. First off, the solos are well written and crafted in a way that really fits the music, but they're a little overbearing. On some tracks it's like the whole song has to be put on hold so that there can be this big elaborate solo and it seems like the flow of the song is significantly affected. The point is that some songs just don't need a solo no matter how well the solo is written. Man, this singer has a voice, but I can't really identify with the lyrics very much. The most substantial part about the special goodness is the off beat drumming. I tell you, this band would be hopelessly average if not for the drumming. Some of these songs are definitely better written than others. The more notable tracks include "life goes by" and "day in the autumn". I never know what to wear and feel pretty weird in the autumn too. My wife says that wearing a jacket makes her feel claustrophobic and that the winter gives her seasonal depression. Funny shit.

www.thespecialgoodness.com

**Tom**

### Smoking Popes

*"The Party's Over"*

**(DOUBLE ZERO)**

Man, this was a great band. I think the Popes were an instrumental part of making me who I am today and having the chance to review their lost album is an honor. Let's just say "The Party's Over" was recorded a couple of years ago and never saw the light of day because the band split-up. Essentially, this was the follow-up to 1997's Destination Failure (one of the best albums of all-time). Since then many bands have tried to replicate the Popes, but have never been able to get past the fact that the Popes are one of their references. Geez, for the long-time fan you are going to be very happy with "The Party's Over". The fact is these guys were still doing what they do best and have followed up previous efforts in suit. One listen to tracks like "Zing! Went The Strings Of My Heart" or "Valentine" and you'll be hooked. I think the holy and prudent referencing such as on "Why Me" with lyrics about our opportunities to embrace God is a bit much, but is definitely a window of things to come with Duvall. Actually to hear that song alone you wouldn't think these guys were one of the most influential punk groups of my life, but I reference the Pixies and Frank Black's solo career which have run a similar course. The Popes are classic.

www.smokingpopes.net

**Tom**

### Neil Perry

*"Lineage Situation"*

**(LEVEL PLANE)**

I don't really know where the name Neil Perry came from. It's probably in their bio or something, but I threw that paper away. What I do know is that this is a excellent collection of Neil Perry tracks, the best you'll find. I'm pretty sure it's not an anthology, because I swear I have a mix tape which has at least two songs that aren't on here. Where the fuck is it? Well, anyways, for those of you living in the dark, musty area of the "don't know" forest, Neil Perry is, well, was, the name of a four-piece New Jersey act which is/was part screamo, part chaos and always constructed beautifully. Kinda like the Locust, only good. And broken up. Now, this isn't exactly a new album set of Perry goodness, mind you; it's more of a compilation of 40 already released tracks, four previously unreleased songs and some film stuck onto the CD (it's a 2CD set) for nerdy computer viewing. It's too bad Neil Perry only lasted four years, as I never got to see them live, so the footage is actually interesting, at least to me. This is definitely jerk-off material for fans like me... and you?

**Lutein**

### Various Artists

*"Uncorrupted Steel 2"*

**(METAL BLADE)**

Metal Blade has always been a label with some great bands, but in my opinion has always done a shitty job in letting the rest of the world know about how great some of their records are. Sure this a label with a great deal of history to it with some legendary records appearing in its back catalog, but for the most part it is a label that throws a million records out there, making it hard to pay attention to what's good and bad. Here to solve that problem is this compilation. Acting as a label sampler of sorts, this is a good representation of what Metal Blade has to offer. Starting off with Six Feet Under's "Amerika the Brutal" from the band's "Bringer of Blood" opus is a great way to get things under way. This is a great track from arguably the band's best album. Other powerful tracks on the album include As I Lay Dying's "Forever", Black Dahlia Murder with "Contagion" and the impressive "No Giving In" by 40 Grit. This is a great CD compilation that shows that a lot of promising bands are now making Metal Blade their home. The problem with this compilation is the fact that you'll play it a few times, pick your favorites, check out their discs and never play this again. The tracks offered on this disc are all part of each band's full length records so there are no real incentives to buy it for the die-hard fans. If you're simply looking at this as a label sampler to check out what Metal Blade has to offer it's great, otherwise save your cash.

www.metalblade.com

**James Wright**

CD-R
solarcade.com

### Solarcade

***"Self-Titled"***

**(Self-Released)**

For a relatively new band that's been around for less than 2 years, Solarcade is involved in a number of different benefit shows and make it a point to let you know how many celebrities and which celebrities are involved in the same shows or projects. Then there's much talk about a contest they are in that could possible win them $50,000 and all these awards the band has been nominated for. When it all comes down to it I see almost every song as being a closely contested rival of that ridiculous Spider Man theme song with those two unmentionables trying to destroy rock music (Kroger & Co.). I just don't see what all the hoopla is about because the fact is that this band could be smoked like a wet cigarette when you compare them to the other bands writers have compared them to (Bono, Bowie, the list goes on). These guys have a long way to go before they can garner such comparisons. I think the driving force behind my feelings is the use of singular guitar notes and using frequency to waver the guitars and the lack of gusto and power in their mid-tempo ballads. The songs that do venture past a typical 4/4 drum beat have Paul Van singing one octave too high. The shoe doesn't fit.

www.solarcade.com

**Tom**

### Black Dahlia Murder

***"Unhallowed"***

**(Metal Blade)**

After subjecting the listener to an achingly dull and protracted introduction the band kicks into a predictable cross between death metal and grindcore. They're heavy on the grind side utilizing the now traditional dual vocal attack with one voice high and screechy and the other low and guttural. There's plenty of back and forth between the two vocalists, and I always find that a good thing for this oft times wearisome genre of metal. The band takes their name from the gruesome murder of Elizabeth Smart (dubbed, "Black Dahlia" by the sensationalistic press) whose body was found severed and sodomized with grass clippings stuffed into her vagina in a vacant lot in the Crenshaw district in Los Angeles, CA in early 1947. You see, they're a grindcore/death metal band so they have to take their nom de plume from either a medical dictionary or from the lowest and sickest forms of human conduct. Sometimes this kind of music can be cathartic, but this band just doesn't hit me right. They have some melodious guitar lines working as counter point to the grotesque atonal barking vocals, and the talent to pull off each song with conviction and finesse. But... Oh, there's always a "but"... it's still morose, macabre and serves only to bring one down. Where's the joie de vivre, Black Dahlia Murder?

**DICK**

### Envy

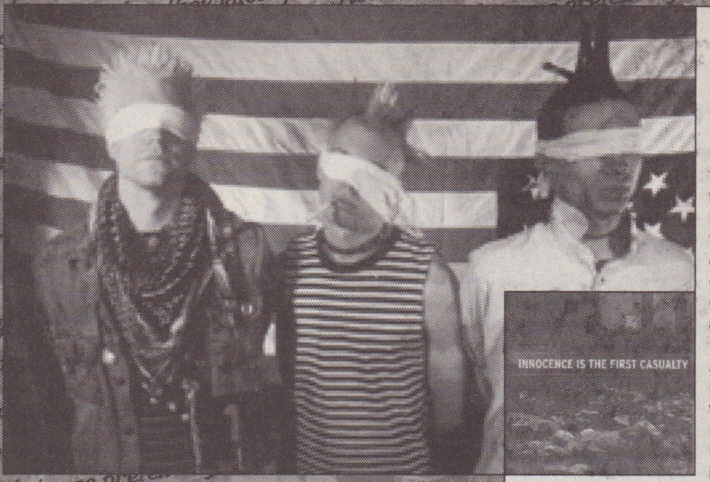
***"A Dead Sinking Story"***

**(Level Plane)**

Japanese hardcore! The lyrics are actually in Japanese too. Now this is cool, I can't ever understand hardcore bands vocals and now it doesn't matter. The music is edgy and intense, with bridges of melancholy drear. I wonder if these guys get the Japanese girls that wear those private girls school outfits. Damn those are hot. The lyrical content is equally potent as the music. Laced with poetic depression, and disconnected pessimism, the only way to check them out is to read the inside cover of the CD. I do find it interesting that hardcore music may be having an underground explosion in Japan as well as the U.S. I think that I'm going to have to investigate. I'll dress like a Japanese school girl and check myself into one of their schools. From there I'll infiltrate the underground hardcore scene and report back. I won't even look at the girls, I swear.

www.level-plane.com

**Thom C.**



INNOCENCE IS THE FIRST CASUALTY

### Anti-Flag

***"The Terror State"***

**(Fat Wreck)**

I read a review of this album online a while back that really stuck in my head. The writer started off the review somewhere along the lines that "If I wanted to listen to some 13 year old sing about anarchy, I'd kill myself". While mildy amusing, that's a pretty bullshit statement. Justin Sane is 15, okay? Big difference. When he's grows up, he's gunna tan your hide! All jokes aside, I think Justin's probably like 17 or something. I used to loathe Anti-Flag for reasons unknown until I saw them perform, which then totally changed my opinion, and I've been a fan ever since. Anti-Flag is the political equivilent of the Bouncing Souls; it's catchy, it's punk rock and you can sing along to it. But instead of shouting the lyrics to "Born to Lose", you recite "You've Got to Die for your Government" or something. This album, although minus the popular Anti-Flag theme songs, is my new favorite, and not just because it comes with a stenciled picture of George W. Bush with the words "one term president" that you can cut out and spraypaint onto road signs, walls and SUV's, although that's pretty cool too.

**PR!**

COME FEEL
ME TREMBLE

### Paul Westerberg

***"Come Feel me Tremble"***

**(Vagrant Records)**

This is 13 all-new tracks from Westerberg. The focus is on the man himself with his songs and guitar in the arrangements. The basic delivery and this focus make the album approach classic The Replacements in spirit. A fourteenth track is a cover of Jackson Browne's "These Days". A separately released DVD documentary of the same name is out that candidly shows a humble and down-to-earth Westerberg bringing it to the fans.

www.Vagrant.com

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**

### Antifreeze

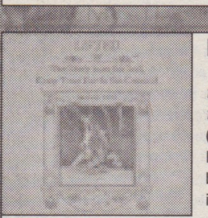
***"The Search For Something More"***

**(Kung Fu)**

Kung Fu: once adored for their panache and coolness in being owned by a Vandal (and sporting Tsunami Bomb), now the most offensive unit-shifting pop/punk label today. Can it be true? Well, yes and no. Unfortunately, bands like Antifreeze are indie versions of the same shit now adored by music television and stations with "Edge" in their name. But at least they still maintain a semblance of realism while being poised as next in line behind The Ataris. With "The Search For Something More", Antifreeze prove that being musically static and incredibly harmonized can be a good thing. The album doesn't shift from inherently mid-tempo Blink-182-influenced—wait for it—pop, but there is an urgency and passion in the delivery of these sharp hooks that is undeniably infectious. The result? You want to sing into your hairbrush and prance around like Tom Cruise in Risky Business, but you also want said hand to beat the shit out of you with the brush à la Ash's hand in Evil Dead II.

www.antifreezeonline.com

**Keith Carman**



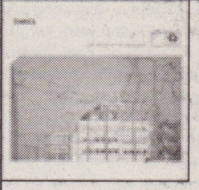
### Bright Eyes

***"Lifted or The Story Is in the Soil, Keep Your Ear to the Ground"***

**(Saddle Creek)**

Bright Eyes (BE) is one of those bands that are so emotionally raw in their (well, his - Conor Oberst, guitarist and vocalist to BE) music, no, aura that they vibe, it crosses into peoples genre's that normally aren't into that style. As BE is one of those bands, some of their songs borderline on true fucking genius. Masterpieces. Whatever word amplipies my pure, unheralded desire for everyone to just spin at least one song. There's plenty to go around. "Lover I Don't Have to Love", "Bowl of Oranges" or "A Perfect Sonnet" from a previous album, "Every Day and Every Night" would be the obvious choices to give to a virgin listener, but practically every song in their catalog (I have four, I think they have six albums total) has it's own unique and gentle flavor. Alt country? Hardly. Fucking amazingly poetic brilliance crammed into a skinnie, emo looking kid? Totally.

**PR!**



### Thrice

***"The Artist in the Ambulance"***

**(Island)**

When a band releases an amazing debut album like Thrice's first release, "Illusion of Safety", one of three things will happen with the follow-up. Most commonly, it will sound, look, smell and taste like ass. And not like, "I'd love to stick my tongue in Halle Berry's ass" ass; more like 'stinky, crusty hair morbidly obese man who eats a lot of Alberto's and get's fucked in his ass and lets guys pull out and finish between his cheeks' ass. This usually doesn't go well with the fans, and they tend to jump ship, save for a few diehards who would willingly accompany ass music to the end of this crappy planet. The second, and less commom but slightly more favorable direction the follow-up album heads towards is complete mediocrity. You buy the CD, jam it into the crappy 3in1 stereo your ex-girlfriend bought you for your birthday four years ago, and it sounds like exactly the fucking same as the last album. The band didn't go anywhere but sideways, and as much of a relief of non-assing that is, it's still disappointing. These could be the songs that just didn't make it on first album, and the only difference is that this album insert is all gay and fancy and some two bit producer hack's name is slapped on the back, taking credit for all his cockknobbing (err, "direction") on the soundboard. I hate when good bands do this. It's almost worse then sucking, 'cuz now the band's fans are like "uhh.. okay, now what?" Luckily, "The Artist in the Ambulance" squeezes into the third conclusion of follow-up releases to a hit: fucking better then the last. Yeah, this is better. Not by much, because "Illusion of Safety" was pretty fucking good, but this is better. Thrice fans know this. The people that blow this album off don't know anything about music, and you can write that down on a piece of paper, lick the other side, smack it on their forehead, point a finger in their face and say "FACT." Thrice sticks to the same dodgeball square of sound structure and buildups/breakdowns; it's gem's like "The Melting Point of Wax" and "Paper Tigers" that really shine like tasty red apples. Thrice did do the now more-common act of sticking a few orchestra-related instruments into a few tracks (cello, violin, viola (whatever the fuck a viola is)), something that, even if more and more bands are doing, hasn't gotten me sick of yet and is a good side direction in indie music. And anyways, Thrice fucking rips it up live, so this is really just a warm up to you catching them at a club anyways. The first user review of this album on Amazon.com is "Thrice is an AMAZING hardcore punk band", but don't consider them that. Think of a less insulting comparison of them being the "Jimmie Eat World of hardcore" or something.

**PR!**

NEW MEXICAN DISASTER SQUAD

## The Vacancy

*"Self-Titled EP"*

**(A-F)**

THE VACANCY
EP

The Vacancy finds themselves on the diversifying A-F Records label where they are fit in as a more mellow punk rock outfit. A re-release of their initial independent EP, "The Vacancy EP" stands out as one of the more toned-down punk releases that I would severely reccomend. Standout moments include the falsetto backups of "Classic Moves" and the touching acoustic "Decaffeinated Winter Weekends." Aw, how cute. Anyways, that song was added on as an addition to the original EP and you'll be glad that it was. I don't care if that makes me a sissy. Fast-forwarding to the present, the four-piece currently finds themselves with a 50% lineup change and a change in musical ambition. Look for them on tour now with Anti-Flag on the West Coast, but maybe don't expect to hear the same songs featured on this release. Hopefully The Vacancy keeps rocking in a free world and doesn't put what they have into a paper bag to throw off the face of a cliff. But that's just coming off the top of my head. They could do a lot of better things like solidifying themselves to explode with the potential that this EP clearly demonstrates. I just hope that they heed their own advice and keep themselves together so that The Vacancy is still the king. Good Luck.

www.vacancyrock.com

**Campbell**

Advance

## Al Howard

*"Serpentine Highway"*

**(Self-Released)**

Raw, uncensored poetry from the heart, this is the shit of an intellectual musician. Respect be given where deserved, but obstacles will hinder a focused interpretation of messages. An innocently naive voice adds genuineness, but fails when asking the listener to give the lyricist credibility. Sorting through the mixed signals, you will find that verbals remain conscious minded. Sadly content is often based on redundant ideas that have lost their varnish to overuse. Reflections on the commercialistic lifestyles of American populants are raised and obsessions about vehicles, clothing, and even the advertising campaigns of soda companies are cited as enveloping sources of materialism. Shrouded with flowery vocabulary keeping listener in a fog of poetism, the bark makes you wonder if the bite would really be all that bad. How much is this individual truly willing to lay down in the name of his preaching? And even though the content is that which can spark revolutions, this is no bust your shit down bump, alright?! The spoken word hip hop poet is way too soft for me, bringing us in with oceanic piano melodies, and some soft voiced poetry verses. Definitely not dull, "The Serpentine Highway" is an alive product, there is no glue sticking these songs to a predetermined format, just some marshmallow fluff to dig through. Hopefully the artist has relieved his need to get these messages out and can grant us insight on his personal revolution through more original ideas in the future.

**Rondi Collins**

## New Mexican Disaster Squad

*"Self-Titled"*

**(A-F)**

So are these guys from the state of New Mexico or are they a new Mexican Disaster Squad? What do disaster squads do? I realize the obvious definition: squads that cause disasters. But, what kind of disasters are we talkin' here? A Mudslide? Male pattern baldness? A totally fuckin', like, blown out party house 'cause the night before was way dope. Regardless, New Mexican Disaster Squad are bar punking in a style similar to El Centro, or whoever is playing bar punk at your local dive. If you're not familiar with the "bar punk" sound, plan a field trip. Bring some close buddies to that sketchy bar you've seen in the weird part of town. I recommend one that has guys with over the top hairdos outside, stickers everywhere, and a name similar to The Lockdown or Crustys. Everyone else that knows what "bar punk" sounds like, I need not explain New Mexican Disaster Squad any further.

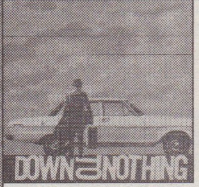
www.newmexicandisastersquad.com

**Thom C.**

## Down to Nothing

*"Save it for the Birds"*

**(Thorp)**



I'm watching the Raiders game right now. I told you I'd cave. No matter how much watching football puts me to sleep, here I am, craning my neck away from my computer to watch Jerry Rice's old ass scamper around the field. Raiders fans are aggressive, snarling people and I'm sure they would like Down to Nothing. DTN is heavy, up in your grill punk-core, with little breakdowns and lyrics that will make you want to punch a Broncos fan right in the face. Down to Nothing is all about the energy 'cause they're straight-edgers and they don't care that you think that's whack (even though, let's face it, it is) as they mash their way through cuts like "Fire Escape" with its indictment: "They packed their bags and split/ And left the edge they didn't give a shit...We're an army dropping like flies." Yeah, you better believe they're pissed. And they know where you live and they know you've been talking shit about the cult of the X. DTN and their twin guitar assault are going to hunt you down and rail you with their sonic assault. And make you watch Al Davis in those busted-ass white sweatsuits. Dude's a kook.

**Brian Greenaway**

## Blue Sky Goodbye

*"Look on the Bright Side"*

**(Uprising Music)**

BLUE SKY GOODBYE

"Sad Bastard Music" is a great name for a stripped down, acoustic emo song. It's from "High Fidelity", when Barry accuses Rob of listening to "sad bastard music" after Rob breaks up with his girlfriend. As far as Blue Sky Goodbye goes, "Sad Bastard Music" is the closing track to a pretty good album, full of hooks and the ubiquitous Get Up Kids influences. But really, who doesn't sound like the Get Up Kids? BSG also shares a few musical similarities with The Alkaline Trio, except BSG's singer Reid Crandall's voice has more of a Mike Ness sandpaper quality, rather than the subtle perfectness of Matt Skiba. In any case, "Look on the Bright Side" covers much of the same emopunk ground that so many others have traversed, heart on sleeve on tracks like, "Highsight is 20/20", "Friday Night Support Group", and "Autumn Bloom". To their credit, BSG never resort to simple platitudes and generic whininess, instead writing winning lines like, "There's nobody out there just like me", and "You're nobody's favorite but you say you'll find the one". There's plenty to like here and enough to keep you coming back for more, you sad bastard you.

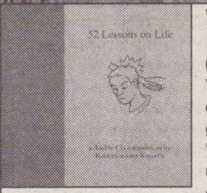
www.blueskygoodbye.com

**Brian Greenaway**

## Various Artists

*"52 Lessons on Life"*

**(Reinforcement)**



Yep, a double CD with tons of hardcore, indie, punk, and emo. Let's get started: Teen Idols' "Backstabber" is awesome-straight up punk with class, speed, and catchiness to boot. You get Ultimate Fakebook sounding like Weezer, which is always a good thing. The Adventures of Jet is a fun band with some serious synthesizer action-don't hate. The Stereo and The Bouncing Souls don't need much of an introduction, the latter here boasts a demo version of "Quickcheck Girl" that you East Coasters will want to pick up. I like The Thumbs and so should you; fast, heavy without being ponderous, and damn handsome. Countdown to Life is a multi-layered act in the vein of Taking Back Sunday off State of Grace Records that you should check out. Victory has got a melodic band like Somehow Hollow? No way. Moral Crux's "Imitation of Life" rocks in the most effortless way possible. Haven't heard The Queers in a while and it's nice to hear they still sound like The Beach Boys on acid. The Reunion Show is a cool band, have you been listening to them like I told you to last year? You had better because they are about as fun as you can get. If you like Gameface you'll like Digger. The Commercials remind me quite a bit of Brand New, with a slightly less talented singer but still pretty cool. Besides all these acts there's a ton of other stuff on here that you'll want to listen to again and again but I'm out of space and if you haven't figured out that you should buy this by now then you're a bigger schmuck than I thought.

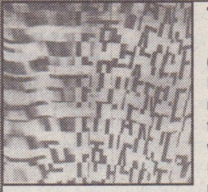
www.reinforcementrecords.com

**Brian Greenaway**

## The Planet The

*"Physical Angel"*

**(54 40 or Fight)**



I get prog rock and math rock mixed up sometimes. It's not my fault, you know? I mean, seriously, who can keep up with all of it? Especially when you like, you know, only listen to one CD (Bananarama, in case you're wondering, the one with "Cruel Summer") over and over again. It's easy to get them confused, so when something like "Physical Angel" comes along, with its helter skelter beats and spastic riffs it's tough to know what to do with it. Are you supposed to even listen to it? I don't know. Trying to describe the sound of the album is like trying to nail jello to a wall, as the proggy-new-wavy feel is layered with squelched vocals that sound like a squirrel getting electrocuted. And it's not like there's just one of the ten tracks that's a little weird; oh no, it's the whole gosh darn LP. So what's a boy supposed to do? I know, the obvious answer is listen to "Uno Violence", in all of its off-kilter madness, trying to make sense of the discordant peaks and valleys and hope that somehow, some way, a record producer will put together a Bananarama tribute worthy of all praise. Keep your fingers crossed, kiddies.

www.theplanetthe.com

**Brian Greenaway**

## Fiction Plane

*"Everything will never be ok"*

**(MCA)**

Fiction Plane

Holy shit! Stings son kind of sings like his old man, meets Chris Cornell and his last name is Sumner! Stings last name is Sumner! Everything in the world is weird right now. I kind of feel sorry for Joe Sumner because he probably never hears the end of it. Not to mention having to follow a legacy of music like that of Stings would be a quite a challange, to say the least. Fiction Plane sounds a lot like most current day mainstream pop rock bands. They could be most easily compared to bands like Bush, or Vertical Horizon. The music is pop-rockin', has lots of hooks, and is aimed at the feel good teen movement. Songs like "Cigarette" would be a smash if featured on an episode of "Dawson's Creek", or an artsy love film featuring the latest hot actors and actresses. Joe Sumner seems to be sporting some bitterness which is indicated by lyrics like, ""Touch me cause' my daddys rich, marry into a bigger fish." I guess everyone has to find the fuel for fire somewhere in life. It must be tuff having to shake girls of your leg with a stick though, what a drag!

www.fictionplane.com

**Thom C.**

### Various Artists

*"MTV 2 Headbangers Ball"*

**(Roadrunner)**

The thing about compilations is that they kind of serve as nothing more than an appetizer for each band. If you dig the song on the album, the hope is that you'll go out and buy the band's full length. The first disc of this CD compilation is a collection of who's hot in hard rock right now featuring the likes of Godsmack, Sevendust, Cold, Hatebreed, Slayer and Static-X. The second disc of this compilation is a who's who of the underground featuring Cradle of Filth, Soilwork and In Flames. The standout tracks were Hatebreed "This Is Now", Sevendust "Separate", Demon Hunter "Infected", Devil Driver "I Could Care Less" which is cool cause the past track I heard by these guys blew, Anthrax "Safe Home", 36 Crazy Fists "At the End of August" and Lamb of God's "Ruin". Some of the songs here are pretty standard for hard music fans including some of the "underground" artists. Unless you've been hiding under a rock you've heard quite a bit of this material already. I dig the fact that Roadrunner tried to put something like this together. It's a cheap way for fans to get some cool music and at the same time expose the more mainstream kids to what lies in the underground.

www.roadrunnerrecords.com

**James Wright**

### Caustic Resin

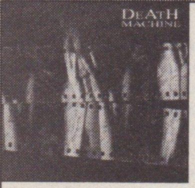
*"Keep On Truckin"*

**(Up)**

Brett Netson is somewhat of an unknown hero, considering today's unimaginable and immense popularity of "our" once sacred "indie-rock." Having played in the O.G. line-up of Built to Spill would be clout enough to respect this guy - but with also fronting the tremendously talented and underrated outfit known as Caustic Resin - Brett Netson certainly seems to stand alone in a crowd of few musicians that are making great music on their own terms. With several albums under his belt, this latest offering "Keep On Truckin," is a venture into the indie/jam/grunge & fuzz world that is Caustic Resin. If "Keep On Truckin" had been released in the early to mid-nineties, when the world was enamored with Seattle - Brett and his Caustic "Crew" would've probably made so much fucking cash, that they all would've bought nightclub establishments somewhere in Cabo San Lucas! But seriously folks; "Keep On Truckin" (like many of Caustic Resin's previous albums) is destined to be a sleeper-keeper amongst the staunchly independent pricks who own/work at "independent" record shops - and of course good folks like yourself and me who just wanna rock-out while doing some bongloads. With nine guitar-driven songs clocking in under just under fifty-five minutes, "Keep On Truckin" is yet another brilliant album by an extremely underrated band. "Wizard Of The Upper Snake River", the fourth track on the record should be nominated for...something goddamn it! That song fucking rocks like crack cocaine! Save that money you were gonna spend on a dime with your "homies" and pick this album up, beeyaatch!

www.uprecords.com

**Gordon Downs**



### Death Machine

*"Self-Titled"*

**(Sensory Dark)**

Dark and gloomy metal. Lots of harshed out whispery and screaming vocals, double bass pummeling, riff stacked upon riff type metal. It's all "angry" and "feel my pain" like the lyrical content of a Staind or Drowning Pool song, but with more ferocity on the musical tip. Highly unoriginal, but holding it's own. There is some identity crisis going on with the members and their 'images'. There is a devil guy, a goth guy, the hardcore guy, the bald really hardcore guy, and some dude with green and red pantyhose on his head with things tied to the dangly leggings. They look like they got lost on the way to a bad Halloween party where only half the people are dressed up. That aside, it's angry, thumping heavy metal with moments ranging from dismissible to "This ain't so bad". Take it or leave it because when you are wearing red and green pantyhose on your head, you obviously don't care what other people think anyway.

**Bushman**

### Brian Jonestown Massacre

*"..And This is our Music"*

**(Tee Pee)**

Shimmering, neo-psychedelic cosmic space ballads fill this CD. The paisley-printed music is stylistically uniformed and alluring in its sublime beauty. These songs bask in a soft, lysergic glow of a multi-colored and expansive soundscape where each track is an unhurried nugget unearthed between early Rolling Stones and Velvet Underground.

www.brianjonestownmassacre.com

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**

### Spiritualized

*"Amazing Grace"*

**(Sanctuary)**

A schizophrenic supernova of garage band intentions with pop overtones, "Amazing Grace" has a tendency to lose you, be it your attention or a clear understanding of where the hell this album is supposed to be going. This album was pulled together in just a three-week recording session, and although some bands have no problem pulling it off, their rush job is reflected in the haphazard way it was thrown together. Often times the music is quite melancholy, spinning lovely anthems that soothe you like a warm bath. Other times you're baffled by a sudden jazz-infused ballad that is immediately followed by a holy-rolling gospel tune asking the "Lord to let it rain on me." With a few redeeming qualities, such as the crisp bluesy "Ballad of Richie Lee," you can tell that Spiritualized had good intentions when they recorded this album (most bands do). However, despite their modest efforts, they ended up with a viscous, incongruent chophouse of styles that soars at first, but eventually crashes. Although they are few and far between, I've known women a lot less moody and significantly more stable than this release.

www.spiritualized.com

**Miss Mia**

### Luxt

*"American Beast"*

**(Blackliner)**

Sacramento, CA's Luxt have attempted to up the ante on their latest release, "American Beast". Originality is definitely something that's in Luxt's corner here. They have crafted a unique and potent sound unlike what pollutes the mainstream of hard rock. The closest comparison I can give for Luxt is to a European band by the name of Guano Apes. Much like Guano Apes' debut album truly impressed me, Luxt have landed themselves in my CD player on more than a few occasions. Vocalist Anna Christine is the driving force behind Luxt's sound. Anna's voice hooks the listener in and then she can take them on a left hand turn out into uncharted territory. I highly recommend this album to anyone looking for someone looking for something a little different.

www.luxt.com

**James Wright**

### Solefald

*"In Harmonia Universali"*

**(Century Media)**

A mixed bag this band is. With contemporary kinship lying in such bands as Moonspell and Alchemist, Solefald is forging their own ground into odd musical niches. The overall feeling is quite melancholy, even going so far as to throw in a mournful sax solo here and there. There's lots of snappy keyboard work, the guitars are heavy, vocals vary from droning incantations to growls to tenor singing, and the drums are eclectic but often fall back on the standard double bass for power. One might imagine Mr. Bungle on their "Disco Volante" album infused with sorrow and all the circusy themes removed. This is sort of a band for other bands. The songs are indirect, somewhat experimental, rambling compositions that are certainly not for everybody. They exist in that zone where an excess of music theory has theorized them right out of the ballpark. They've forgotten the most direct route to the music fans' heart is through their chest with a strong, sharp melodious knife. These guys usually have so many themes running at once the listener gets completely lost in their bizarre fugues. I'm one of those guys that likes this kind of thing, and I only critique the band on it to warn others. Now, if you're with me, then you'll enjoy the hard work that went into this album. If you're not with me, then you'll find it to be a load of self-indulgent masturbatory hijinks. So, there you have it, to paraphrase Bush, "You're either with me or you're with a gang of ass raping pedophiles." So which is it?

**DICK**

### Ignatius

*"Baggage Handler"*

**(Out)**

Ignatius is Brought to us from San Diego by Steve Westbrook. When listening to the first part of this excursion, nothing obvious comes to mind. He has a way of leading you down a different path than what is expected. A groove isn't created and then ripped away for dramatic purposes, a weakness I find in a lot of what is frequently called IDM. It devolves and evolves into something completely different. These tracks feel as if there have been extracted from base elements. Pure electronic, like being able to record and play back the pulse of an molecule. As the recording stretches on we are brought into realms of mesmerizing cycles and slippery breaks. The last two tracks feel distinctly different from the rest of this release. Track 9 has a pleasant floaty feel with plucked melodies. Track 10 sounds like an electronic insect that has crawled into a recording device leaving its chemical trail. Overall this is an intriguing CD.

**Steve**

### El Centro

*"Prohibido"*

**(Finger)**

Orange County, California. Great, I've never been oversaturated with music from that demographic... nope, not ever. But if I was, I would be more than willing to predict that it sounded something like El Centro. Some borrowed reggae flavor and typical guitars paired with some bass lines churned out of a funk/ska grinder and the occassional...turntable? (Yeah, I know.) Songs sound like a number of "Orange County," or whatever, bands could have written. "A.D.D." is my top three tracks, but I hate that they hint at what could develop into a five minute bass solo but instead deny me of that ecstasy. The vocals aren't tough or aggressive, so they match the rock - if that's what does it for you. It's not that bad if this happy, upbeat, almost predictable kind of music is your prerogative, but all I'm saying is if anyone gave me a quick quiz, multiple choice, about where El Centro's geographical influence if from, a.) Orange Countyish or b.) anywhere else in the world, I would pick...well who am I to make assessments?

www.fingerrecords.com

**Campbell**

## The Suicide Machines

***"A Match and Some Gasoline"***

**(Side One Dummy)**

THE SUICIDE MACHINES

These guys have been like three different bands. First they were the ska band that kicked some serious ass. With their second record they became hardcore. I lost track after the third record, which was so radio friendly it included songs about how much they loved their pet dog. Well, Dr. Jack would be stoked because the boys from Michigan are back, tearing G.W.'s politics to pieces and raising some serious rabble in the process. Jay's lyrics point the finger squarely at the boobs in office as well as the corporations that put them there, which sure, anybody can do, but The Suicide Machines make it sound so good. With a few rasta, Jah-inspired hooks that'll have you feeling nostalgic for Operation Ivy and a whole lot of aggression that will leave a Minor Threat meets the Descendents taste in your mouth, "A Match and Some Gasoline" is an indictment of American politics at its best. If "Your Silence" doesn't wake you the fuck up with its pointed, "You said politics don't concern me and that's just fine so sing along to the radio's love song/ And when they reinstate the draft you'll be the first to go...Gonna die at the age of 23, what you gonna do, still say, 'It doesn't concern me?'", then you might as well bury your head a little bit deeper. Better to learn a lesson from a punk record than not at all, right?

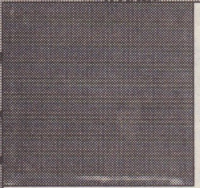
www.suicide-machines.com

**Brian Greenaway**

## Matchbook Romance

***"Stories and Alibis"***

**(Epitaph)**



I was just talking to my friend Hailey. She's going to law school at BYU. How brutal is that? Mormons everywhere, encroaching on every little bit of her life until all she sees are their syrupy smiles and backhanded compliments. Only slightly less alarming is the current emocore invasion. There are more emocore bands than you can shake your goatee at, spewing their sappy swill throughout the airwaves. I am happy to report that Matchbook Romance is neither Mormon nor sappy and "Stories and Alibis" should be in your player right now. Seriously, go and get it because every second that you're without it your life is worse than poor Hailey's, and that's saying a lot. Taking a page from Taking Back Sunday, Matchbook Romance's songs combine subtle rebukes with strident immediacy to create a swirling, multi-layered sound full of broken relationships and yesterday's regrets. "Playing for Keeps'" dynamic mixture of full-throated vocals and haunting harmonies contrasts sharply with the screamed lyric, "You're as welcome as cancer, but my door is always unlocked." While the pummeling drumming of Aaron Stern (kid's so good he's retarded) drives the beats, it's the tenor of Andrew Jordan that sweeps itself above and below the music in an effortlessly crashing wave that really sets this release apart from so many of the pretenders in the genre. Think of Hailey while you're listening to this one, because she misses the beach and the beach misses her.

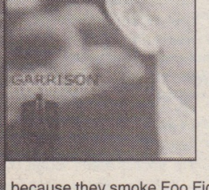
www.matchbookromance.com

**Brian Greenaway**

## Garrison

***"The Silhouette"***

**(Revelation)**



I'm not sure if I like these guys: 1) Because of the brilliant parentheses in their first song title, "Come On Die Young (No Seriously)", or, 2) because they've got a firm grasp on ass-churning punk rock, or, 3) because they smoke Foo Fighters like a pack of Newports when it comes heavy, melodic power-pop rock. Gotta dig the arena muscle of "God is not on our Side." A five-song EP, the album isn't without its bullshit experimental moments (I'm looking at you, "The Closer," a slowed-down industrial slice similar to Filter). For the fans of "The Model" EP, here's the second half you were waiting for.

www.revelationrecords.com

**Jeff Skruck**

## Grandpaboy

***"Dead Man Shake"***

**(Anti)**

DEAD MAN SHAKE

This first song kicks so much ass I can't believe my ears. This is some serious rock music. Imagine a current day version of "Johnny Be Good" with a sound that truly sounds as vintage as the music. I'm talkin' rock via the 60's, blues influenced, country influenced, and as warm a tone as any I've heard. But this is Paul Westerberg formerly of the Replacments that we're talkin' about here. Any one who is a Replacements fan, or Westerberg fan for that matter, will be ecstatic with thier first listen of this blues/rock masterpiece. The album continues on with several more traditional rock blues songs that have the soul of many classic blues artists. Then we go back to "Bad Boy Blues" which brings the reverb, the harmonica, the classic guitar twang, and Paul's classic vocals. "Dead Man Shake" echos with experience in writing, recording, and playing music. From the use of slide guitars to reverb on snare drum, you will find it hard to believe that this is a brand new album. "Dead Man Shake" is an album that anyone who calls themselves a blues fan should get.

**Thom C**

## Government Issue

***"Strange Wine"***

**(Dr. Strange)**

GOVERNMENT ISSUE

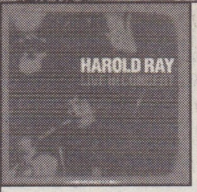
A re-release of their 1988 "Strange Wine" EP along with live material from a CBGB's performance recorded in 1987. You can pretty much divide Government Issue's material between the early D.C. hardcore stuff and the rest when they sounded like the Damned. This is from their Damned period with John Stabb effectively aping Dave Vanian, but they still play a few of their early tunes. Never really a hugely influential or innovative American punk band, but always a solid one with plenty of fans. This live stuff shows how tight and energetic they were and, actually, outshines much of their studio work.

**Zack**

## Harold Ray Live in Concert

***"Self-Titled"***

**(Alternative Tentacles)**



The idea is so simple and effective that it borders on genius. Why not ditch all music of the last several decades and recreate something that has already worked, namely horn-driven scorching R&B. It is a '60s garage soul riot that comes out running, right out of the gate. Of course, Harold Ray has some affinity groups to look to and takes "Busy Body" from The Lyres and "Ain't Nothin' But a House Party" (J. Geils Band). This puts the band, an assembly of fiery human jukeboxes, into a long line of rock 'n' soul torchbearers stretching back to first days of rock.

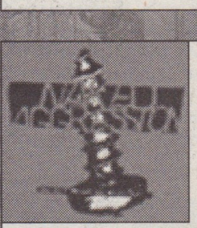
www.alternativetentacles.com

**Tom "Tearaway" Schulte**

## Naked Aggression

***"Gut Wringing Machine"***

**(Rodent Popsicle)**



Have you read any Charles Bukowski? I've read "Women" and I freaking hated it. I just couldn't get into it and I couldn't understand where all the hate came from. "Gut Wringing Machine" is a short story by Bukowski about how people end up getting the life sucked out of them by the modern world and it makes a great title for Naked Aggression's final release (due to the untimely death of guitarist Phil Suchomel, from asthma-related complications). "Machine" features Kirsten Patches' searingly snotty vocals interlaced with old-school, Crass-era punk. The thirteen tracks are comprised largely of polito-punk at its most basic: simple, quickly smashed chords over a deafening din of drumming and Patches' sweaty vocals, complaining of things like, "The good times too short/ The bad times too long/ The crazy times, turn around and here I go," all at 100 miles an hour. Naked Aggression bears a slight resemblance to some of the Dead Kennedys' later efforts and makes a nice companion piece to any of their albums. And if you happen to read "Women" and like it, please let me know what I'm missing.

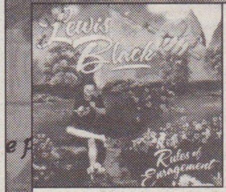
www.nakedaggression.com

**Brian Greenaway**

## Lewis Black

***"Rules of Enragement"***

**(Comedy Central)**



Hilarious comedy album. Lewis Black is a comedic fucking genius, molesting numerous subjects and topics from Minnesota to homeland security. It's a good album, but if you could only afford this or the DVD, get the DVD. Lots more for your dollar, if you get what I'm saying.

**PR!**

## Jag Panzer

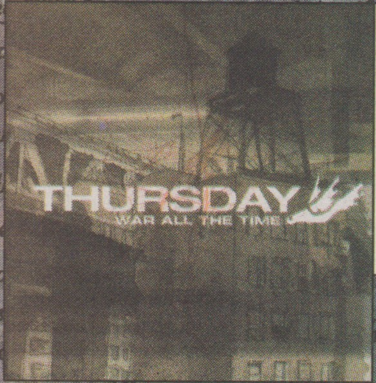
***"Decade of the Nail-spiked Bat"***

**(Century Media)**

I had to do some research, but what we have here is a double CD release on which Jag Panzer has re-recorded (or sometimes just remastered?) old classics from their back catalogue. The band's reason... I'm not sure, but rampant poor quality bootlegs of Jag Panzer's releases are suggested. The songs here are primarily taken from their "Tyrants" EP (every song on this one), "Ample destruction" (all songs re-recorded except "Harder than Steel" and "Cardiac Arrest"), "Dissident Alliance" (5 tunes off of here) and three other songs. The re-recording, I'd have to say despite having heard the originals, is a smashing success. These are good old power metal/progressive metal songs in the vein of Maiden, Fates Warning, DIO, etc... that are treated to new millennium recording in the age of Pro Tools and other digital delights. So it's not just that this is old sounding power metal, but it's actually old power metal, updated, so the fans have a much better point of reference for where the band came from than all the crappy third generation bootlegs in the world could provide. It's like a trip down memory lane, even if you haven't been there before.

www.jagpanzer.com

**DICK**



### Thursday

***"War of All Time"***

**(ISLAND)**

The major label debut of Thursday is good, damn good. While not as, how you say, "debutmatic" as their last album (Full Collapse) or as raw and fresh as their first release (Waiting, off of Eyeball), it's still an excellent CD. Melodic, poetic, blah, blah, blah. You know what Thursday sounds like. Here, have some more.

**PR!**

vena•cava
(so e-vol

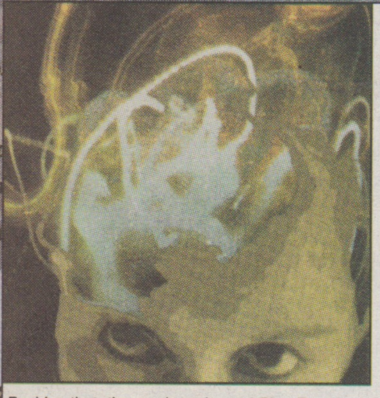
### Vena Cava

***"So Evolved... Inhuman"***

**(SELF-RELEASED)**

If you are from the California region, specifically the southern part, you might have already stumbled across some of these songs. 7 of 12 are from a previously released EP, but now it's filled up to a proper album. Good deal. You get indie-rock with large pop sensibilities with some paper soft boy/girl vocals. Most of the numbers are on a peppy, upbeat tempo and pop along with a smiling energy. They have that fuzzy blown cheap amp distortion thing happening with the straight ahead backbeats, very Husker Du. They are the kind of band you stumble across in some dive bar and end up buying the EP... which is now a full on CD. For some reason, I picture this kind of sound going over better in Chicago than in San Diego. Although it was recorded with Gar Woods (ex-Tanner) and that's actually credible around San Diego. This band is one of those solid locals that is always playing and touring and that you think everyone has heard, but for some reason, they haven't. But they should.

**Bushman**



### Blue Root

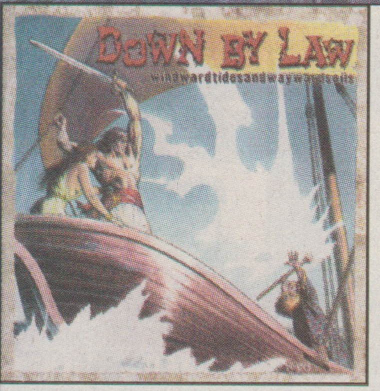
***"Holocene Epoch"***

**(DOUGHMAIN)**

Imagine the good elements of the 90's Seattle scene mixed with some funk elements and you should come close to understanding what Blue Root sound like. This is a pretty solid offering right from the opening chords of "Chapow" to the funkier tempo change of "Palm Trees and Incense". Underlying elements of funk are hidden here with Ben Reiss showcasing the bass prowess of an early Flea from "Mother's Milk" era RHCP. Unfortunately, there are times that the production makes the music suffer. During "Meliorate" the drums sound as if someone is beating a tin can and that can be somewhat irritating. Besides that, the music rocks and Blue Root is definitely something to check out, especially if you remember a time when not every band on the radio sounded the same.

www.bluerootmusic.com

**James Wright**



### Down by Law

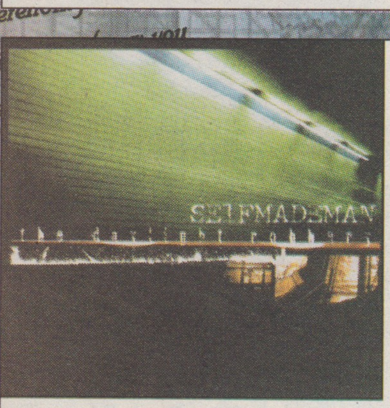
***"Windward Tides and Wayward Sails"***

**(UNION LABEL GROUP)**

Raw and full of life, Down by Law holds steadfast to the principles that make punk what it is. This may not be their strongest work, but the familiar zaftig melodies are still there along with Dave Smalley's vocals, emotive and powerful. Chock full of the usual swirling guitar lines and high-energy hooks, you have to work at keeping your head from bouncing around in silly agreement. The lyrics aren't especially intelligent or too deep, but by the end of the album you feel an odd call to action whether it's to inhale a twelve-pack of beer or to try and change the world, which is obviously the stamp of any good band. They have some tongue-in-cheek fun with "I Wanna Be in AC/DC", and reward you later with a traditional punk anthem, "Kickdown". "Windward Tides and Wayward Sails" is yet another favorable installment in Down by Law's altruistic contribution to punk music and fans won't be disappointed.

www.downbylaw.com

**Miss Mia**



### Selfmademan

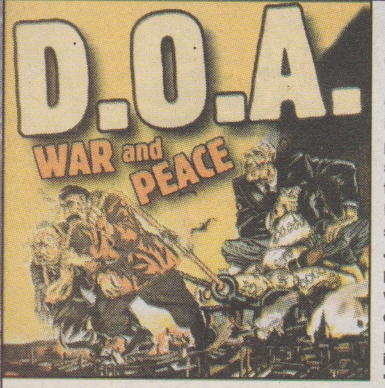
***"The Daylight Robbery"***

**(SMALLMAN)**

I could never really wrap my head around these bands that want to get all scientific on you while they're "rocking out". Thanks to Selfmademan though, I might drag out my protractor and equate a few angles. This fourth album is somewhat technical in its musical approach, but the band packs so much energy and passion into every second of it you can't help but love it. Edgy and angry while being pure and sincere, this album rides the fence between math and (dare I say it?) emo quite well. You can hear that they work on each melody with the intensity of The Brain plotting a method of taking over the world, but they keep it close enough to home that you feel like you know what they're talking about, Pinky. Wow…intellectual AND emotional. What's the world coming to?

www.selfmademan.cjb.net

**Keith Carman**



### D.O.A.

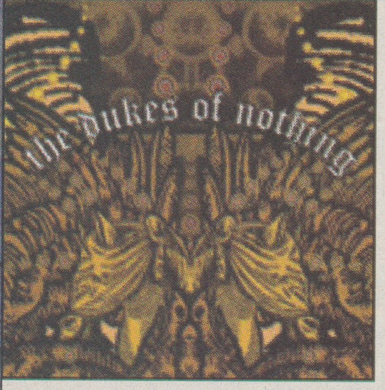
***"War and Peace"***

**(SUDDEN DEATH)**

"War and Peace" is a superb celebration of Canadian punks D.O.A.'s 25 years of tearing it up and preaching more power for the people. Known for their extremely political stance, this anthology captures all of the favorites including "Disco Sucks", "Liar For Hire" and "Fuck You", as well as newer songs like "Mexican Holiday". Released on Joey "Shithead" Keithley's own label, it's a perfect buy for those who aren't familiar with the D.O.A. catalog and want an introduction to the band at a fraction of the cost. For you D.O.A. addicts, word on the street is that Keithley is releasing his first book - "I Shithead, A Life In Punk" (Arsenal Pulp Press), and Sudden Death is re-releasing D.O.A.'s "Something Better Change" and "Hardcore '81".

www.suddendeath.com

**Miss Mia**



### The Dukes of Nothing

***"War and Wine"***

**(TORTUGA)**

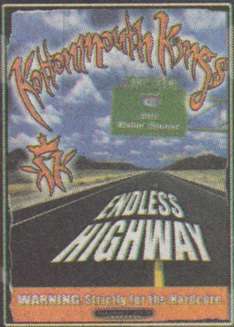
I got caught out in a lightening storm last night. It was totally rad, only it was sort of scary. And wet. Also scary is The Dukes of Nothing. These guys sound like they just crawled out of a hole in Alabama and I wish they'd crawl right back down and fill it in behind them. With guitars that are distorted beyond all recognition and sloppy-as-a-retard style, you're left with an album that Nashville Pussy would call rough around the edges. The standard white trash lyrics about clichéd drugs, slutty women, and typical Southern imagery makes "War and Wine" a trip down the same old unpaved, rural road. If your idea of fun is a few notes off key and if you think Scissorfight is a little too polished, then The Dukes of Nothing might just be your thing. But if you're one of those people then you can't read anyway, so you might as well go back to making out with your cousin.

www.dukesofnothing.com

**Brian Greenaway**

# SUB-NOIZE RATS

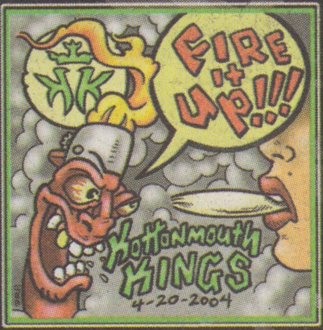
## NOiZE FROM THE UNDERGROUND


Kottonmouth Kings
ENDLESS HIGHWAY
WARNING: Strictly for the Hardcore

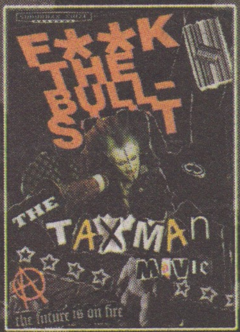
iN STORES NOW

Kottonmouth Kings
LiVE
Classic Hits

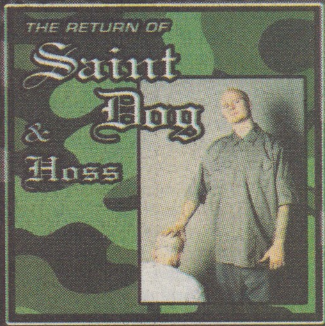
iN STORES NOW


KK
FIRE it up!!!
Kottonmouth KINGS
4-20-2004

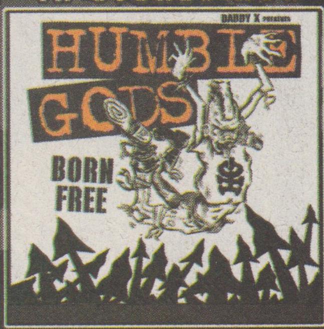
COMiNG 4-20-2004


F*#K THE BULL-SHIT
THE TAXMAN
the future is on fire

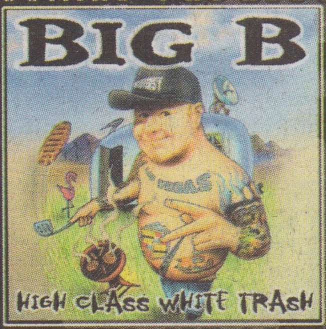
iN STORES NOW


THE RETURN OF
Saint Dog
&
Hoss

COMiNG FEB 17TH


DADDY X presents
HUMBLE GODS
BORN FREE

COMiNG JAN 6TH


BIG B
HIGH CLASS WHITE TRASH

COMiNG JAN 20TH

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iN STORES NOW

JUDGE D
JUDGEMENT TIME:
"FROM THE MOUTH OF THE JUDGED"

iN STORES NOW

Pakelika presents
"Another Cult Classic!"

iN STORES NOW

ROCK IT SCIENCE
PHUNK JUNKEEZ

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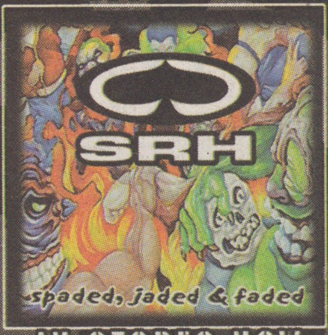
SUB NOIZE RATS
SUBURBAN NOIZE RECORDS

iN STORES NOW

COMiNG SUMMER 04

TSUNAMI BROS. "KING HARBOR"

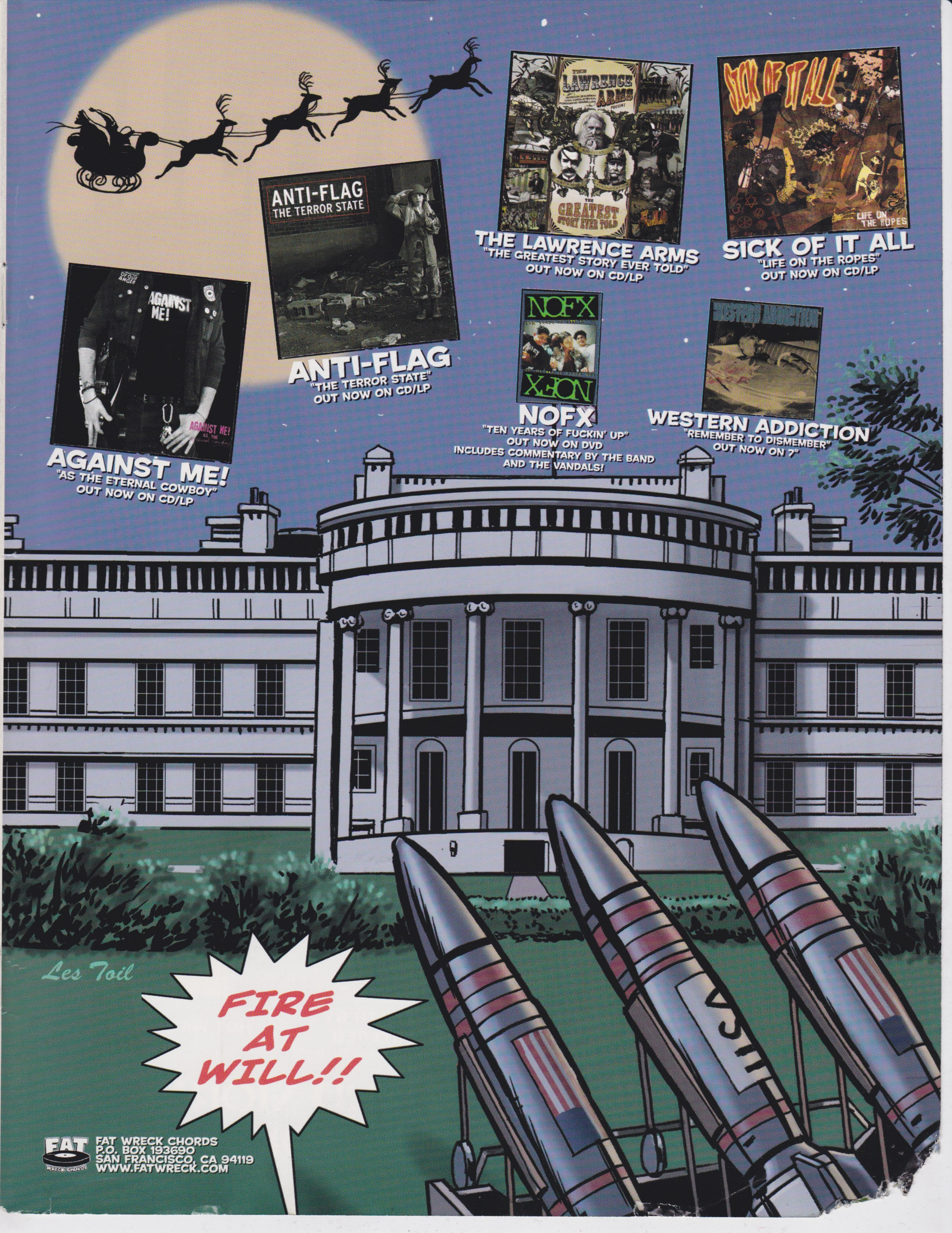
iN STORES NOW


SRH
spaded, jaded & faded

iN STORES NOW

SUBURBAN NOIZE
RECORDS

www.SuburbanNoizeRecords.com



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# Epitaph

## Q: WHAT WOULD JESUS BUY?

PENNYWISE
FROM THE ASHES

**PENNYWISE**
From The Ashes

JOE STRUMMER & THE MESCALEROS
STREETCORE

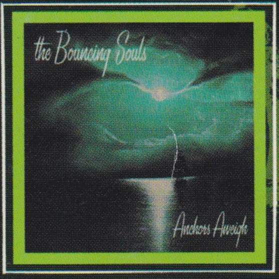
**JOE STRUMMER AND THE MESCALEROS**
Streetcore

THE WEAKERTHANS
RECONSTRUCTION SITE

**THE WEAKERTHANS**
Reconstruction Site

ATMOSPHERE SEVEN'S TRAVELS

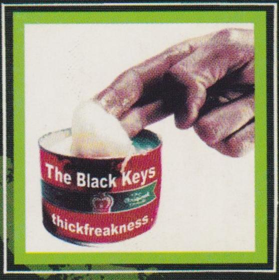
**ATMOSPHERE**
Seven's Travels


the Bouncing Souls
Anchors Aweigh

**THE BOUNCING SOULS**
Anchors Aweigh

Matchbook Romance

**MATCHBOOK ROMANCE**
Stories And Alibis


The Black Keys
thickfreakness

**THE BLACK KEYS**
Thickfreakness

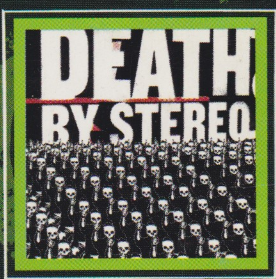
MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK I AM THE MOVIE

**MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK**
I Am The Movie

**TURBONEGRO**
Scandinavian Leather

Dropkick Murphys
blackout

**DROPKICK MURPHYS**
Blackout


DEATH BY STEREO

**DEATH BY STEREO**
Into The Valley Of Death

hot water music
CAUTION

**HOT WATER MUSIC**
Caution

## A: THESE RELEASES AND MORE ON SALE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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